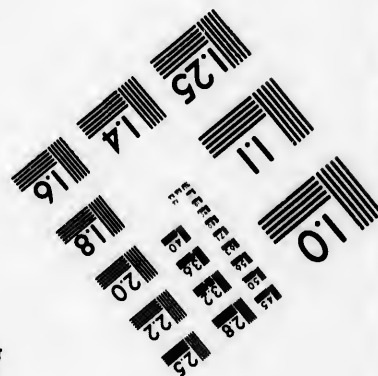
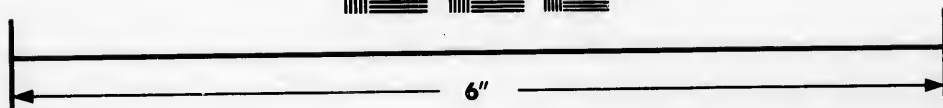
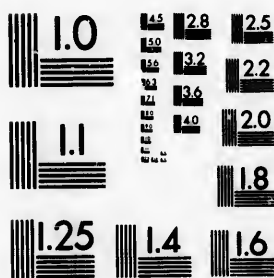


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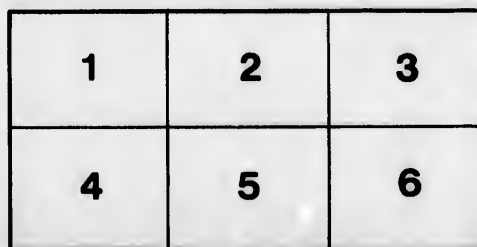
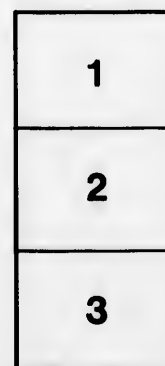
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SONGS FROM THE SUNNY SOUTH.

Cloth Boards, 8vo, 7s. 6d.

THE FOLLOWING ARE AMONG PRESS NOTICES RECEIVED.

"There can be no doubt that we have a true, if not a great Artist, in the Author of 'Songs from the Sunny South'; one sentence would be sufficient to stamp him as this, viz. :

' That bitterest distress,
The falsehood of a false success.'

But such successes as Mr. Grant may win will be perfectly genuine, for his work has both thought and melody, and rises at times to no mean height. 'Old Seas and New' and 'A Heart's Tragedy' are very good indeed, and, if we feel inclined to cavil at the new version of Sir Thomas Mallory's old story, it is not because it is wanting *per se*, but more from force of association. A weird and effective piece is 'Double Identity,' carrying out that theory of the spiritual body * * *"—*The Graphic*.

"In 'Songs from the Sunny South' we find much admirable work, a genuine musical feeling, and some thought which should not be permitted to die. The best pieces are—'Old Seas and New' and 'A Heart's Tragedy.' * * * A mystical Poem which will recommend itself to many is 'Double Identity.' * * *"—*The Morning Post*.

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"The Author has a good deal of poetical fancy, and not a little power of poetical expression. * * *"—*The Academy*.

"These Songs of Indian scenes and memories are an agreeable surprise. Kingsley's desire that a Poet should arise, who should sing the glories of the tropics, inevitably occurs to the mind; and

A

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though Mr. Grant scarcely fulfils the whole of Kingsley's wish, he does at least give some vivid and beautiful sketches of the luxuriant and wondrous riches before which our more temperate scenery pales into tameness. Not that all these songs are of India. Some have only the old themes of love, and life, and loss; and one long Poem with a singular subject treats of Double Identity, a topic not unfrequently suggested in legendary story, but not to our knowledge developed in such a definite outline as in this Poem, which shows considerable ingenuity combined with poetic fancy. Yet the Indian pictures will probably be those most noted in this pleasant volume. * * * There is plenty more worth quoting. * * *"—*The Literary World*.

"Vivid description of the beauties of tropical nature. * * *"
—*Sunday Times*.

"Mr. Grant possesses considerable facility of expression and mastery of form. * * *"—*The Scotsman*.

"The Author aspires high, and has tried many themes and many styles. * * * The thought and feeling are often youthful and immature, tho the form is finished. * * * Mr. Grant's volume, however, raises expectation. It has now and then the touch of true experience, and in this case he can be bold and independent in utterance—which is much."—*British Quarterly Review*.

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"* * * We find some crudeness, together with remarkable vividness and reality. Indeed, a total absence of affectation is noticeable in all the Poems, though they are too often tinged with that sadness which seems the necessary heritage of the thoughtful youth of the present day. * * * Several other pieces we might

quote with equal pleasure, but we trust our readers will study them for themselves."—*The Liverpool Weekly Albion*.

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"In this volume there are many evidences of high poetic power, and though there is considerable inequality in the merit of some of the pieces, the work, taken as a whole, is one which undoubtedly deserves a place of honour in the library of modern poetry. The graceful Ballades, and Rondeaux, and other of the shorter pieces, attract and charm the reader by their careful finish and successful treatment of suitable themes; whilst the originality and power of such poetic sketches as 'A Heart's Tragedy,' 'Epimetheon,' and 'Prometheon,' or the transcendental treatment of some of the psychological problems of existence (of which 'Double Identity' is, perhaps, the best example in the work), cannot fail to interest many readers. 'Vivian' may be regarded as a Poet's protest against Tennyson's conception of one of the Author's favourites, and the piece will please many, in spite of the poetic merits of Tennyson's verses."—*The Aberdeen Journal*.

"The volume contains much vigorous Poetry. The diction is forcible and direct, and many of the Poems show not a little sustained power. Mr. Grant's strength lies for the most part in description. In the shorter Poems, near the beginning of the volume, we get some vivid glimpses of tropical scenery. * * * Not a few of the pictures presented to us in the companion pieces, 'Epimetheon' and 'Prometheon,' are sketched with a firm and rapid hand. In

'Double Identity' there are some descriptions full of considerable beauty. * * * In 'A Midnight Vision' we have an example of equally vivid, although more realistic, descriptive power. * * * Some of the sections of 'A Heart's Tragedy' are well conceived and carefully wrought out."—*The Daily Review*.

"We must confess to having been much charmed with many portions of the volume before us. We subjoin a 'Ballade,' for which we thank the Author. * * * There are not a few signs of carelessness, but the picture is so good that we can forgive a great deal. * * * A much finer 'Ballade' is on page 192.—The Author seems to have a special skill in these intricate French measures—Rondels, Rondeaux, Villanelles, and Ballades. Altogether, the Book is worthy of a careful perusal by the public."—*Stirling Journal*.



“Will Mr. GRANT take a kindly hint from a critic who has a genuine respect for his power, and give the Public what it really wants, and what he is evidently able to draw,—bright pictures of a life which is strange to us, and interesting because it is strange?”
—*The Spectator*.



PRAIRIE PICTURES,
LILITH,
AND OTHER POEMS.

PRAIRIE PICTURES,

LILITH,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

JOHN CAMERON GRANT.

(AUTHOR OF "SONGS FROM THE SUNNY SOUTH"; "A YEAR OF LIFE" "THE
PRICE OF THE BISHOP," ETC.)

LONDON:

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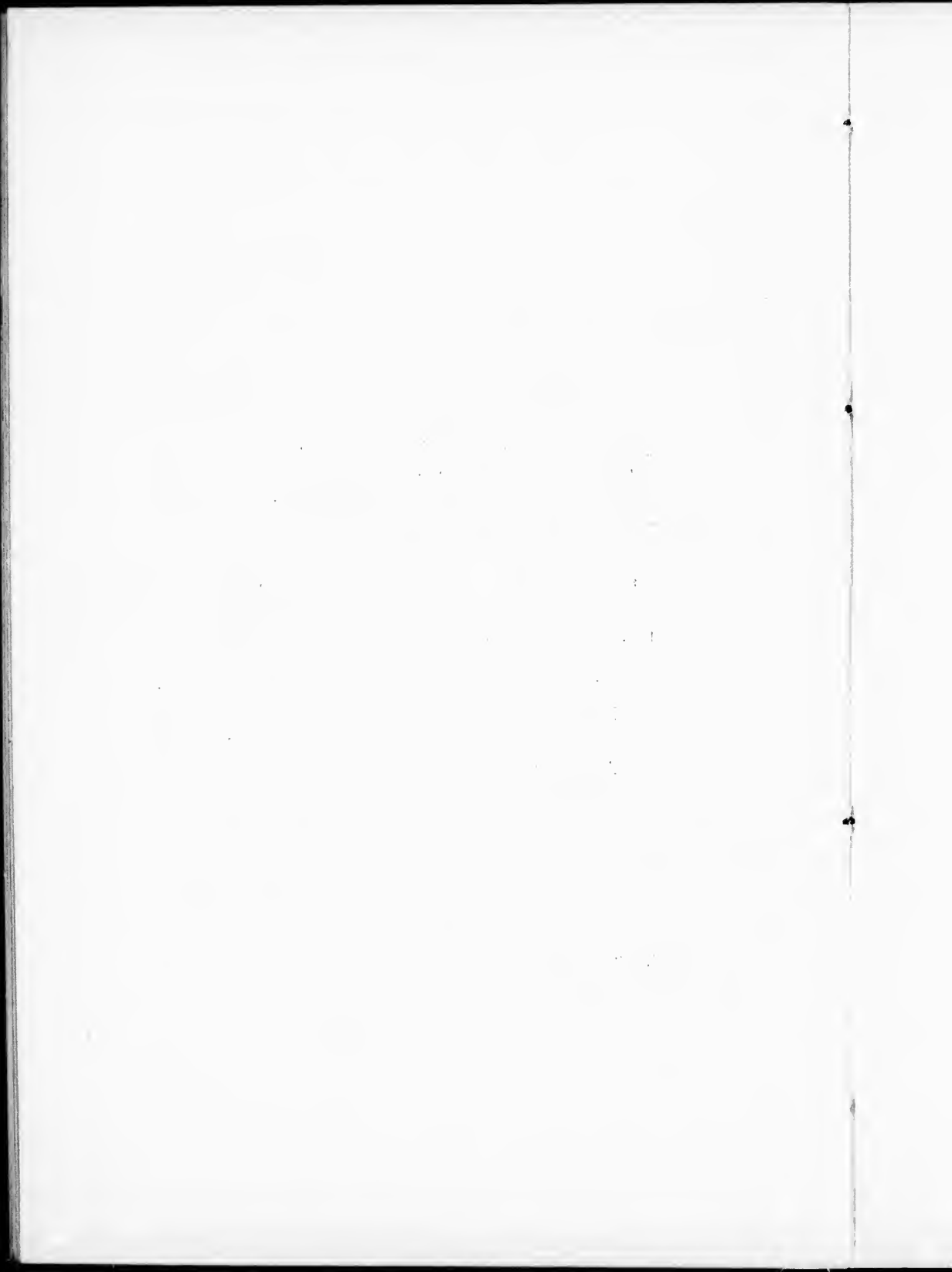
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TO ALL I've met, for all their kindness here,
I dedicate this volume, to renew
And deeper grave this truth, now trebly true,
Your world-vast England still is very dear
To that old England that her sons uprear
O'er every land, whose greatness grows in you
Whose blood is one with that old blood she drew,
From Angle, Saxon, Celt, or Viking year:—
New Vikings plough the long green Prairie seas,—
New Angles plunder Nature's every store,—
New Saxons toil and fell the forest trees,—
New Celtic blood boils up, and sweeps before
All staidier folk,—and still each northern breeze
Flings wide the flag that bound us one of yore!

MANITOBA,

July, 1883.



P R E F A C E.

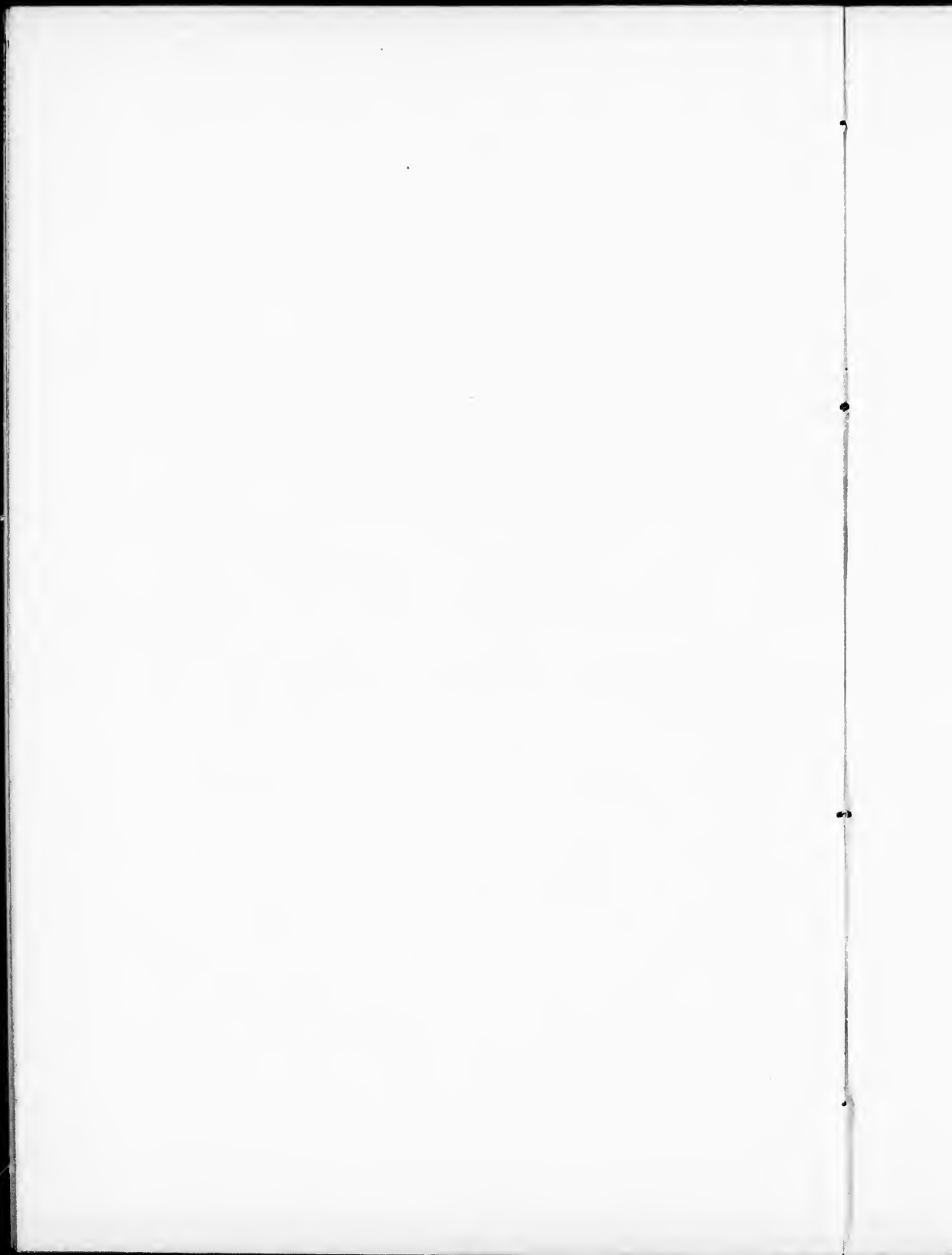
WHATEVER power I may have of description, whatever sway, slight tho it be, over the senses of men I may possess thro the influence of song, I would wish that herein developed to its utmost to do what little I can to attract the attention of my Countrymen to this Large Land, this huge Britain of the future.—To use a hackneyed expression, it is not a Land of Roses, and I for one am sufficiently grateful that it is not ; for as thought wanders over the past pages of History I feel my heart leap for joy that our crown is to be a wreath of Fir-needles and strong sprays of Northern Pine and not a languid coronal of Lotus. It is not a Land of Roses, but the actual grinding poverty met with in Europe and its vast Centres is utterly unknown, and work here will always meet with adequate, and more than adequate, repayment. Canada can take all England's over-crowded children and give, if nothing else, good

water, free air, fuel and food for the labouring, to each a home and freehold, to each a consciousness of independence and part in the political progress and development of the Nation : to all her Little-ones free Schools, and to each and all a grand climate, and that greatest of all God's gifts—Health.

England little, nay, knows not at all her greatness out here ; has scarce noticed this Maiden grand-child of hers, —Manitoba—to-day but barely in her teens ;—has hardly heard the names of those giant Babies,—Alberta,—Saskatchewan,—Athabasca, and all the younger yet to be born throughout the boundless North-West.—Bountiful in summer, grand and kindly enough in winter,—albeit stern at times to the trifler and the careless,—these young children have in them yet undreamed possibilities. Theirs is to be a huge Agricultural Population, and those settling here will have no need to dwell in cities : on his own farm, with his family about him, a man may live as he can never hope to live in our dear “Old Country” with its ever increasing commercial and social centres, its expensive schools, and strange and artificial system of daily life.

The indulgent kindness with which my former Volumes have been received both by the reading Public and by

the Press, has encouraged me to publish these few present sketches of pleasant places and of times spent over sea in that great Anglo-saxondom of the same tongue and blood as ourselves. The ties that draw the English-speaking Peoples together broaden and strengthen year by year, and it is for the welfare of each and all that each, in his place, strive to increase this feeling till we be no more twain but one flesh, even as in part we are so to-day and as so we were altogether in the Past.



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9

PRAIRIE PICTURES.

THE PRAIRIE.

I.

BREATHLESS almost, asleep,
Unbroken, grand, and pure ; no furrow run
Thro the thick grasses, and the green that meets
The far off sky and melts into the deep
Beyond, till lost in golden depths of Sun :—
Man not yet here to break the ground and mar :—
No stir beneath the still above defeats ;
The Prairie lies as silent as a star. * * *

II.

They stretch away before,
The limitless billowing grasses blue and green,
Pale topaz some with stalks of amethyst,
Bowed to the breeze that passes gently o'er
The leagues of wild oats lying wide between
The marshy tracts and higher lands and dry,
With spots of lighter soil caressed and kissed
By Blue-bell buds of lapislazuli.

III.

The Faerie's Flower here,
 Waif from a world above and still as bright,
 Whispering the wind that woo'd it to the west
And stirred each delicate Hair-bell far and near,—
 Blue as a sapphire, clear as chrysolite,—
 O'er the now settled silent singing Lark,
 And o'er the piping Thrush of yellow breast,
 And Night-Hawk sleeping still from dark to dark.

IV.

There is but one awake,
 The Robin that would make a decent Rook
 But for his brick-red breast, in size and strength
I almost think that he the palm would take,
 And quiet outface him with his knowing look—
 There rustling from his furrow thro the grass
 A Gopher goes, who has awoke at length,
 And stands up like a man to see you pass.

V.

Along the way we go
 In the dried creeks and by the furrowed trail
 Great Burdock leaves, and Docks, and swampy
 plants,
And countless Candy-tufts with crown of snow
 Beside their sisters showing pure and pale,
 And Flowers innumerable, whose legion mocks
 The very stars, and in the sunlight slants
 The great brave purple clusters of the Phlox.

VI.

See growing at our feet
The wee white Rose, with every petal cleft
Heart-wise, and with pink veins that delicate spread,
To feed the fragile bloom in the fierce heat
Thro the pure tissues tending right and left,
And the green buds, some not yet grown, and
some
Thrust from their sheath with tender tip of red,
The promise of the loveliness to come.

VII.

Rising above the wold
With sea-green centre flecked with flakes of light
Stands the dwarf Sunflower, yellow and maroon,
Conscious of gorgeous dress, yet, not o'er bold,
Bending his head and leaves of malachite
Above that Dragon-fly of rapid wing,
Who preys about thro all the afternoon
The Shepherd's-purse once green now withering.

VIII.

Gay in his scarlet coat
The splendid Soldier-lily, gilt and black
With paley *or* and velvet, splendid plant,
Touched here and there with richest brown we note,
And bright green trimmings running down his back
Gayer than aught, save Heralds when a King
Is crowned, he stands, rich Autumn's Pursuivant,
A Croesus o'er the gaudiest growths of Spring.

IX.

And Ariel's wild Thyme sweet,
Crushed by the foot, sheds forth its clean perfume
And fills the air with summer and delight,
As lazily you turn and pick and eat
The scarlet Strawberry that hides its bloom
Most modestly beneath its trefoil leaves,
Eclipsed in form and flower by its big white
But fruitless bastard brother, who receives

X.

Attentions due from all
The busy swarming crews of midge and gnat
That hum around him and the purple Veitch,
And make the wild-Pea flower a palace hall,
The sweet wild-Pea, with long stem stretching at
The white Wolf-willow, with his last year's sticks
Left from the fire, whereon that wily wretch
The Hunting-spider sits and plans his tricks.

XI.

The gilded Marigold,
Like burnished ore thro all the long warm day
Staining the Lilies' cheek of angel white
With his reflection, like a Sun grown old
Burned swarthy red and told of time's decay,
And coming Autumn, as his cousin did,
The black-cored Marigold, with tips of light
And every petal deep in velvet hid.

XII.

And all their kith and kin,
The Marigold with every petal pink
And three-fold deep indenture at each edge,
And rich red seed and centering, closing in
A core of green ; and flashed from heart to brink
The starry Marigold with lustrous brown,
Each petal cleft with a pale yellow wedge
Shot from an opalescent glittering crown.

XIII.

The yellow Mustard-flower
That spread the fields with cloth of saffron hue ;
The flat-roofed Hemlock standing like a ghost ;
The grand Valerian, a splendid power
Of colour 'gainst the shade a dark bush threw ;
Wind-flowers, and white Anemonies, and red,
With lavish hand thrown round and without boast,
Nature's rich treasure unimagined.

XIV.

Light indescribable,
And the Sun smitten back from the grand glass
The Charlock stretches made, and sphered in
Green clouds and billowy wastes of swathe and fell,
With flowers like Planets flaming round, and sparse
And scattered sprinkled mists of Nebulæ
Built by the legioned nameless blooms that win
A place above that rolling grassy sea.

XV.

The strange Convolvulus,
Half pink, half white, so fairy delicate
You could but guess the colour, with pointed leaf
And sheathed green buds trailed downward, hiding thus
The dark earth bank beneath, rich, brown, and slate,
From the small hovering brick-red butterfly,
That soared and settled for a moment brief
With Painted lady and Fritillery.

XVI.

With crumpled yellow cup
A nameless Beauty next, and then the great
Deep yellow Orchis, like an Alderman
Of goodly personage, and rising up
To ensure his small mottled Cousin, late
At the flower council, who shows all his spots
And smaller Self, but yet of goodly span,
Shaking among the awed Forget-me-nots.

XVII.

Life everywhere, but Life
That is not lust of living at the price
Of something slain in the fierce strife to be,
But a wide altar's incense, rich, and rife
Not from some victim's bloody sacrifice,
But with the gentle increase of the Land
That goes up like a divine melody,
All is so beautiful, so calm, so grand.

XVIII.

Here man can draw near God,
Or, may be, all the place is nearer drawn
To Heaven, or Heaven stoops down and touches it,
Until it lifts the soul from out the sod,
Makes evident the light in all things born,
Whereby we know their words are true, who tell,
Earth hath her holy grounds that still permit
The invisible Godhead nigh grow visible.

THE ROLLING PRAIRIE.



I.

SET like a spell-bound ocean on a sudden transformed to
land,
Silent in every hollow, and with ridges yet blown by
the breeze,
It lies like an emerald before us, and held in an infinite
hand,
Limitless, rising and falling away to the western seas.

II.

Something of wonder about it, the look of the eyes of a
child
Seen on the face of its flowers, with a voice in the
breezes that pass,
And its calm airs are holy with hope, as tho, when Omnipotence smiled,
It had caught the reflection of Godhead yet kept on its
marvellous glass.

III.

If ever a sound had silence, if ever a voice or prayer
Went up from the speechless earth with a myriad
tongues of praise,
I think it was heard on the Prairie, and breathed in the
delicate air
That rose like an incense to heaven thro those long
light July days.

IV.

I had no mind to paint it, and thought and hand grew
weak
As earth became transfigured and golden before my
eyes,
"It is good for us to be here"—and I prayed, but I
dared not speak,
For the Presence that filled His temple was the Hope
of the Centuries.

V.

And the lamps of the evening were lighted and all was
still and sweet,
And the clouds in the west rose-pink with a ruddier
fringe of flame
Round the holy spaces of Sunset, too pure for the
Angels' feet,
Where God had a new name written and Nature was
that new name.

A PRAIRIE CITY.



I.

Now we are drawing near :—

We round the bluff and strange against the sky
 An Elevator lifts its quaint design,
 And traces past of man and beast appear,
 A Bison's skull bleached white and bare ; unsoled,
 With toe agape, a jack-boot long cast by ;
 And stretching west, and west, and west, the Line
 Fringed with a yellow foam of Marigold.

II.

The little Windmill brown,
 Almost a child's toy, spinning round and round,
 To feed the Engines pumping night and day :—
 The sturdy team that just have made the Town,
 With waggon loaded from some neighbouring
 farm :—
 A great black-boarded wall, made smart and crowned
 With long black stove-pipes, and a bright array
 Of lightning-rods to keep the place from harm.

III.

A wooden side-walk now :—

Six barrels and a trestle and a crate
Lying upon the vacant corner-lot,
Scraps of brown-paper and a wandering cow,
An empty flask, and bottles two or three,
A stack of lumber and a broken plate,
A worn out stove and battered cooking pot,
A Loafer sleeping off his last night's spree.—

IV.

Two Indians in their paint
And usual garb of dirt and laziness,
I speak of Sioux, studying the gaudy prints
Whereby the coming Circus makes acquaint
The Public of its stores ; huge Snakes, with
grunt
And roar ten mighty Elephants, no less
Than thirty feet at least in height, and hints
Of monstrous Tigers and a Lion hunt.

V.

Gnawing upon a bone
A Pup beneath a patent Harvester,
With spare wheels leaned against a Poplar stump ;
Some empty cans, torn sacks, and garbage thrown
Fearless of any sanitary rule,
And every one too busy to demur,
About the green and scarlet wooden pump ;
Three Churches and a really splendid School.

VI.

A Chinese Laundry ; —

Cloths flapping free to dry next door in scorn
Of aid Celestial, next the *Something* House,
And half a dozen more Hotels hard by,
Each with its own peculiar Hangers-on
About the Bars and doors, with boots forlorn
Of any blacking, who for pasture browse
This one-year-old strange built up Babylon.

VII.

A Magazine for Oil,

And piles of Cordwood cut for winter use,
Cutters that take their summer holiday,
Rolls of Tar-paper, and great heaps of soil
Dug from the needful cellars under ground,
Molasses-barrels, cans of Maple-juice,
New Waggon, Harrows, Ploughs in bright array,
And Barbed-wire fencing piled in many a round.

VIII.

Here the succesful Store

With queer supply of goods and odds and ends,
And then Her Majesty's Post-building strange,
And further on a Barber's pole, before
A shed with *Graphic* pictures on the walls,
A man being shaved, who, I've no doubt, intends
Some questions soon of *Township, Section, Range,*
At the Land-office where everybody calls.

IX.

Well, may they call and get
Each man his labour's right reward, and fruit
Of his far travel to these Western plains,
Whose bosom broad and bountiful and set
With yellow gold of Harvest to increase
Gives promise of man's Victory, and to boot
One that will crown each Toiler's strifes and pains
With the rich gifting of a glorious peace.

X.

A goodly Town indeed ;—
That is, will be, when all the Town is built ;
At present, well, at least there are the lots—
“ Fair homes for all,” so the prospectus reads :
And when the Track is touching either sea,
And from his steed the Speculator spil't,
And Capital has cut the present knots,
No doubt a splendid Centre it will be.

XI.

Beyond a River, seen
As one looks down between the swarming wires
And telegraph poles, and then the long low Hills
Closing that quarter in with velvet green
To bring the Wiltshire Downs before your mind,
But dotted o'er with Homesteads and their bires :—
A Half-bred shanty, soon to go, for kills
The Anglo-saxon all but his own Kind.

XII.

Drive down the street and soon

 You pass the graded section and are out

 Upon the open prairie, and the Track
Stretches before you, and the burning noon

 Dances upon the plain and blows its haze

Up as a furnace, till you turn about

 And see the City lying at your back

 Like a toy with which some Giant child yet plays.

LAKE LANDS.



I.

A GLITTERING stretch of glass,
Crimson with sunset to the west and crowned
By two gold Islands, with the space between
Like cloth of silver, when the shadows pass
From strand to strand and cloud the small pools round
The larger Lake's shore, and bring up the breeze
That crisps the ripples and bends the rushes green,
And shakes like faint smoke the blue distant trees.

II.

See, nearer by the Land,
A watery world of Marestalk and such plants,
And flatter leaves that float and curl and flap
Over before the wind, and stretch a hand
Each to his fellow, flinging back the slants
Of sunlight like gold javelins at the sky,
That, like a shield, fills up the further gap
Beyond, and blazoned with quaint heraldry.

III.

Swinging upon the reeds

The Rushbird, with its ruddy breast that shows
The old George-guinea colour, bobs and clears
By hair-breadths only the crisp waves and weeds
That rise upon the waters, as he stows
His dainty little crop from those rich sheaves
The Flags, with heads held up like Indian spears
Set round with long straight feathers of their leaves.

IV.

And gathered at the shore,

Where the stream meets the Lake from the far hills,
Clumps of coned Willows cluster, thick and tough ;
And Maretail shoots its jointed stem up, o'er
All plants the Patriarch, that the water fills
With life, except on rocks of distant range
The great Club-mosses, remnant dwarfed and rough
Of mighty Races passed and fallen in change.

V.

The blown Anemone

Fills up the stretch of Marsh, toward us drawn
With feathery Reed and curly-budded Rush,
White stars reflected from a great green sea,
Or foam bells flung from Venus newly born
When all the world was breathless at her rise,
Quiet as at that hour when comes the hush
Of evening down the mountain galleries.

VI.

Along the water's edge

The green and purple wild oats, flinging free
Their supple limbs and proudly feathered heads,
With set straight stems that form a natural hedge
For the wild Duck and her young nursery
That need a mother's care and all restraint,
Chasing the feathers that she plumes and sheds
From her broad back,—a family very quaint.

VII.

Tufts of Swamp-cotton next,

With knightly plumes and waiving pennonsils,
Show firmer land between us and the lake :—
And, like pouting Primroses, cross and vext,
Wee crumple-petaled Flowers that sulk at ills
Surly imagined, and their swampy home,
Perhaps because they can't lift stalk and make,
With leaves packed up, a ramble round, or roam.

VIII.

A lovely Butterfly,

With great red vanes and dull gold underwing,
Hovering about the hidden water pool
The Dock leaves cover with a forestry,
Dull green above, but when the wind makes swing
A leaf, it shows the purest silver sheen
Below, and gives you such a feeling cool
Of dim worlds half beneath the water seen.

IX.

And closer yet to us
Dwarf-willows and Red-willows tangled up
With wind-laced branches, thro which the wild Rice
Shoots up with quivering lace-work marvellous,
Dropping its bounty in the open cup
That trembling Water-lily holds to catch
And keep for some young thing, a dainty nice,
For some young thing to be born or to hatch.

X.

Another string of Ducks—
Plump, plump, plump, plump, they spatter in the Lake
And make each Marsh-bird scold them, as it sings,
Against their greedy diving and loud sucks,
And routing thro the mud :—and Birds that shake
And pause in flight ; the grey Musquito-hawk
That cannot cry except with quivering wings :—
Swamp-gulls with their long vanes and plaintive
squawk.

XI.

And there, at war with all,
With small Birds chasing him from place to place,
The outlaw Hawk, a ruffian little thief,
Mighty for mischief, tho in body small,
Of all I know most impudent of face,
The careless little Esau of the land,
With confidence almost beyond belief,
A rascal perching almost at your hand.

XII.

Beyond the muskeg green
The Musk-rat built up island homes that rise,—
A Rat on one of them sunning himself
And seeming well-contented with the scene,
And watching sleepily the Dragon-flies
That chase their smaller brethren round his feet,
Who thinks now of his rooms below, and shelf
Well stored with all the dainties Musk-rats eat.

XIII.

A Bulldog wakes him up,
And makes him snap, a most indignant Rat,—
Those Flies in India we call Elephant—
And those on whom they took a thought to sup
Were quite as cross as our old Musk thereat,
But couldn't dive below as he has done,
Who made from that great white-stemmed Water-plant
A thousand ways the busy Tadpoles run.

XIV.

Above the Swallows skim,
And wheel and circle in their rapid flight,
Yet watching where that grand Blue-bottle basks ;
I wonder they don't take a snap at him
And his green brother settled to the right.—
That young Bird there.—'Are those Blue bottles
good?'
His Mother blue I do believe he asks,
Who answers—'No, keep to your proper food!'

XV.

How pleasant is the light,
And all that God hath made beneath the sun
How fair to look on ; I have often thought
If this world here can be so fair and bright
At times, may it not be forever won
From pain and death into that perfect state
From which it wandered, and again be brought
Into God's fold—or is the hour too late ?

PIKE POOLS.



I.

LEAVE the Assiniboin,
Climb the steep slope and turn up to your right
Along the wooded Southern bank, and, look,
You see the corner where the waters join
The larger river flashing in your sight,
Like a great Salmon in the sunlight, now
You've got a likely place to drop your hook,
There, just beyond that Scrub-oak's ragged bough!

II.

Carefully down the bank,
Waist deep in wild Mint sweet as Spring's first breath,
Break thro the tangled squirting Cucumber,
And those lean Thistles myriad thick and rank ;
You have a Frog, I think, chased to the death,
Caught in that little swamp we just have passed,
Well, let us see what fins you're going to stir,—
By that dark log is just the place to cast !

III.

Hark at the Bumble Bee,
His nest is somewhere near, if I could find
Its mossy dome ; he stops, and starts again,
And now rolls off : he always seems to me
A surly sort of Bear among his kind,
Yet with uncertain strange good-tempered ways
As real Bears have, and with grumbling plain
Will let you touch him in hot summer days.

IV.

Hullo ! you've got him there.—
A Beauty, keep your point up, or,—look out
He'll get beneath that root and then, good-bye—
I told you so : ah well, he didn't fight fair,
Better luck next time :—this Musquito rout
Are perfect Pirates,—Demons broken loose ;—
See, see the first Columbus of the sky,
'Tis early yet, the foremost year's Wild Goose !

V.

'That's it :—cast further down.—
What dear wee birds those small Canaries are,
And so far North too ; see, a chrysalis,—
Cold here must count for nothing, or this brown
Great fellow never could survive.—One star
Has just peeped out beyond that clump of brush
And brings with it the sweetest time that is,
Those moments e'er comes up eve's latest ' Hush.'

VI.

So you've made up your loss
And gained some splendid fellows from the Pool
While I sat dreaming :—did you hear that slap,—
The 'old Man Beaver' as he swam across
Did it to show tho all was beautiful
And still, his thoughts were but work, fight, and
eat,
So raised himself and gave the waves a tap
That sent the ripples giggling to our feet.

VII.

You're done ? We'd better go
For the day darkens, and for miles and miles
Between the bluffs the gold Crysanthemums
Take deeper colour and old-guinea glow,
Where twixt the trees the quiet evening smiles
While gathering up the light about our road,
Where each tired fly that settles down becomes
The quarry of some swift tongued silent Toad.

VIII.

Be careful where we crossed
That quaking bit of swamp some short hours past,
Crushing the tiny scattered petals white
About one's feet, and the long Rush that tossed
Its blood-red tresses in the air, and cast
The red seeds round ; and now we cross again
The old dry creek that takes so large a bite
Of land from out of the rich loamy plain.

IX.

We left the horses here.—

Aye, there they are, and harnessed now for home

They make the wheels spin, bound for stall and rest
And silent, like the Night-hawk hovering near,

Night settles down ; a fringe of fiery foam

Is all the Sun has left upon the shore

Of that dim cloudland to the further West

That fades, dies out, is gone, and day is o'er.

WATERWAY.



I.

A Northward flowing stream,
 With mile deep Willows growing on its bank,
 And patches here and there of Poplar trees ;—
 Long grasses green, that wave, or moveless dream
 Beneath each scorched and melancholy rank
 Of trees that suffered in the last year's fire ;—
 Dwarf-oaks upon the outskirts, and one sees
 Beyond the timbered ridges rising higher.

II.

Great open flats of mud
 Gluelike and rich, and brown and steamy-warm,
 Piled here and there with drift wood lying waste ;
 A late Red-willow breaking into bud
 By banks that take fantastic shape and form
 With sides torn off in many a ghastly slice ;
 Trees driven downward, broken, scarred, misplaced,
 Showing the fierce onslaught of last Season's ice.

III.

High up in many a bush
The *débris* of the rushing furious flood,
Like banners torn of some departed Host,
And one Pine log, whose strong and sturdy push
The river's utmost fury has withstood,
Tho shattered sore and riven from bark to heart ;
A Silver-willow like a silent ghost,
An Otter that slips in with sudden start.

IV.

A winding stream indeed,
Albeit too rough for any water-plants
The long green snaky Slime-weed holds its own
About what should be haunts of Rush and Reed,
As the strong water thrusts its way and pants,
Tho sluggish seeming, goaring like a Bull
The shores, where none could find a single stone,
But banks of clay that hold their own and rule.

V.

Great stretches like green fields
Of Rice or some such marish tropic grain,
And Sorrels rising patchy here and there ;—
And, in the hollow that the low ridge shields,
Some yellow flowers and blue a living gain,
Wild Turnips here and there, and weeds, and worts,
And Goosegrass, with its quills up in the air,
Shaken by the wind along the river skirts.

VI.

And next a long lagoon,
The river's bed once ere Time altered it,
With sandy looking bottom that would take
A man up to his neck and drown him soon
At one false step, a very treacherous pit,
Smiling and fair with flowers of white and pink
Spread neath the Sun, a seeming honest lake,
With Lilies fair to tempt you from the brink.

VII.

And, all along, the sides
Are fringed yards deep with withered yellow scrub
Starred twixt the stems with golden water-flowers ;
Then patches of some water-wort, that hides
Leeches, and beetles fierce, and snails that climb
In clans together, and, where those bubbles rise,
I see a dark and uncouth form that cowers
But cannot tell who owns that pair of eyes.

VIII.

But there are some sweet spots
Somehow grown dry, and with *Convolvulus*
Flinging its white cups everywhere around
Over the peeping blue *Forget-me-nots* ;
And *Briar*, and *Rose*, and *Lupin*, leading us
To brighter moods of thought, for here we see
Earth's tenderest Children rising from the ground
To do their best what ere those round may be.

IX.

A Northward flowing stream,
And strong and sulky where I see it here,
A Caliban of waters, made to bear
Cargoes unwillingly for man, and dream
Of winter' sleep, and of the waking year,
When it can rend its banks with savage mouth.—
O River, rolling almost useless there,
If but your waters flooded to the South !

BUSH.



I.

Patches of alkali :—

On the horizon the faint smoke of trees
 Dim thro the haze that dances on the Bush,—
 The nearer Bush that touches us hard by,
 Full of the whispered secrets of the breeze,
 We turn to catch them, and thrust in one way
 Thro branches that resist with many a push
 Whereunder lights and shadows mingled play.

II.

We reach an open space,—
 So far the fire has run, a piteous scene,
 And ruin in the place of flowers and fruits.
 The Silver-willow stiff with blackened face,
 The ghostly Poplars killing out the green
 Beyond, and burnt about the lower stem,
 With shriv'led leaves and scorched and twisted roots
 Showing the agony that passed thro them.

III.

A miserable sight
With green and dead wood strangely intermixed,
Patches of bald scalped rock, an ashy patch
Of grey and black mixed, here a streak of white,
And fallen trees, and standing skeletons fixed,
And unknown flowers of tawny orange red,
And strangely flying butterflies to match,—
A very carnival among the dead.

IV.

A grim sight the burnt wood,—
The very life that seems to strive assert
Its presence first but makes it look more weird ;
Evil has crushed but not o'er mastered good
That upward strives the more in spite of hurt,
Life cast down but unconquered, and it makes
Somehow a promise, that, when most are feared,
Then nearer draws the end of pain and aches.

V.

But the burnt wood is past
And once more thro the fair green palaces
Of Nature's folk we wander, fresh and cool
The breeze blows on us, as ourselves we cast
On mossy cushions ; what surpasses these
In summer, when the leaves sing over head,
And all about us is so beautiful
We cannot dream of winter and the dead ?

VI.

Look at this dear wee town
 Of tiny fungus, scarlet, buff, and white,
 With temple-roofs, hotels, and domiciles,
 For all the little midgets black and brown
 Working beneath them ; some with all their might
 Bearing great burdens, busy o'er the mould
 Whereon with leaves drawn up in ordered files
 The short-stalked Dandelion sits in gold.

VII.

Enormous Plantain trees,
 Fully twelve inches high, and great wild Beans,
 Pale purple starry flowers, and willow-galls
 On every willow leaf, and sweet Sweet-peas.—
 A tiny, darling Wren that flirts and queens
 It o'er her tiniest sweetest family,
 Teaching them use their wings, with tender calls
 Each moment to her Mate assisting by.

VIII.

Here a grey Squirrel flicks
 On to a black stump studded o'er with stars
 Of pale white fungus—move, and he is off
 Scuttling along across that pile of sticks,
 Making for his *Penates* and his *Lars*
 Safe up in some old hollow, there, up there
 I think I hear his little playful cough,
 And almost see his tail that jerks, ' Don't care ! '

IX.

Red cups the Faeries use,
And little cairn-gorn cups of yellow moss
Or lichen, set upon the Poplar stems,
And brown puff-balls whose skin the Faeries' shoes
Are made of here, and ferns the breezes toss,
And busy Bumble-bees and Grass-hoppers,
And kingly Spiders with great diadems,
Cicalas chirping when a chance occurs.

X.

And in the waning year
The Strawberry leaves grow scarlet and blood red,
Set off beneath the trefoil Clover green,—
Magnificent magenta Cockscombs here
Such as at Home in some prim flower bed
We only see ; and Berries whose own name
I know not, save that on the woodland scene
They seem to thro a ruddy sheet of flame.

XI.

Here thornless Bramble trees—
They grow like trees—with clusters of ripe fruit
Deep red, and Blue-berries with little leaf,
And Whortle-berries, and bright Cranberries,
Millions,—the proof is that all Hands are mute
Amongst them, and the Raspberries, wild Plums,
Wild Currants, and wild Cherries, and in brief
Taking first fist of any fruit that comes.

XII.

I have moved far and wide,
India and Africa, our Island home,
And European shores, but I confess
That, in the glories of her summer-tide,
There is no Land however far you roam
That can compete one instant with this Land,
So prodigal in over fruitfulness,
So lavish in the bounty of her hand.

ALONG THE LINE.



I.

ONLY along the Line,
No need to wander far on either side,
Sufficient beauty lies about our feet
To give us thought for years of the divine
Great love that flows o'er all things like a tide ;—
We will not wander far away, but rest
Here by the Rails, two Friends that never meet
Thro all their iron length towards the West.

II.

Here the earth banks are brown,
In the dry creeks and by the graded Track
Great Burdock leaves, and Docks, and swampy plants
Whose lease of life looks shaky, nigh run down,
Now that the water has slipped further back,
But the orange Marigolds look well, and blink
In the bright sun, neath which the Maretail pants,
With here and there a Rose of darker pink.

III.

There, Aliens to the soil,
The Thistles that have taken well their root
About the Land, like those whose Country's sign
They represent, the foremost Sons of toil,
Our Scottish Folk that everywhere out shoot,—
A kind of Gentile Jews,—all other men,
And, with a strange freemasonry combine
Their mutual help for sake of Hill and Glen.

IV.

Here's a construction Train
Creeping along with load of ties and steel,
Slow, for this track is not yet ballasted,
Now then—one jump and we together gain
An empty Flat in passing, and we feel
The sudden cool breeze on our cheeks, tho slow
Indeed the great black engine rolls ahead—
How lovely lies the Land thro which we go!

V.

We near a Pine-wood now,—
A little patch, and far off from the vast
Great Continent of Pine that stretches East,
A place for axes only not the plough,
But round this little wood a sea is cast,
The densest, greenest, fruitfullest of seas,
Where hangs for all live things an Autumn feast,
Millions and millions of ripe Raspberries.

VI.

Under the tall trees' shade,
Blue-berries fit to fill a hundred pails,
And Wortle-berries thick as they can lie,
And Cranberries, so closely grown and laid,
They seem to flame along the very rails,
And low nut bushes, Hazels bent with fruit,
A thousand spots for pic-nics by and by,
To-day the Bear's, poor beast, a fated brute !

VII.

Out in the sun again
Among the beautiful wild Crysanthemums
With sticky ball-like bud, and bursting forth
In golden leaves that last night's shower of rain
Has washed of dust caught by their resinous gums,
So splendid are the flowers around us spent
No doubt you ask, is this your *iron* North,
Or some rich garden of the Orient ?

VIII.

Numberless nameless Blooms,
The delicate wild Veitch pale violet
Sometimes rich purple, tawny-red and pink,
And here a single scarlet Lily looms
Up o'er the treble scarlet Lilies, set
Over the great grey Lark with mottled wings,
Couched by the waterpool with hidden brink
Dreaming the song the which at eve he sings.

IX.

Again we get near man ;—
The snaky lines of fence that now stretch out
On either side the track declare him near,—
With here and there a barbed-wire fence that ran
To the far Farm and ringed it round about,—
Show that we stop soon ; there, the brakes are on,
We shunt and take the empties back from here.—
Well, look round till 'tis time that we were gone.

X.

Mark you how Nature works ;—
The old rail buried in rich growth of green,—
Here we were meant to toil, you build a Track,
Grow careless, for the constant labour urks,
Let be the mould, nor scrape the moss between
Its joists, and joints, and woodwork, suddenly
Nature just rises up and takes it back,
Like the old rail lost neath man's very eye.

XI.

Out yonder that great pile
Of Railway iron rises yet too high
For any growth, save of the last year's rust,
But if those rails were left, while mile on mile
The Track went on, 'tis certain by and by,
And all of us have but to come to this—
The welded iron would melt into dust,
Iron or Man, what profit its or his !

XII.

Back now to whence we came :—

We pass the darkening wood at quicker pace

For all the cars are empty—here we are,

Now for a jump—the ground is all the same

No soft spots here—the Train has left the place—

We pick ourselves up— not a bruise, all right—

Dark ! yes, but there swings out a friendly star,

And we strike homewards thro the silent night !

AFTER DARK.



I.

FROM Earth to Heaven His finger points to-night,
 And flashes up past Merak and the plain
 Where rolls the Dragon and the lesser Wain—
 His stretched out finger, the great Northern Light.
 Earth lies below us like a sea, to right
 And left, like moonbeams, two great rivers strain
 Their poleward course to meet the Arctic main
 Rolled thro dim lands of mazy malachite.

Dark clouds are on the sky, but thro the joins
 Of high Heaven's armour shoot the meteors fierce
 His bright belt twinkles from Orion's loins,
 And his orb'd sword at times would seem to
 pierce
 The pale electric haze, that spreads and coins
 New spheres each instant from the *carte* and *tierce*.

II.

Of the keen lightning blades that cross, and strike
As on some infinite anvil sheets of flame,—
But all is silence, for the secret Name
That none can tell holds every thunder, like
The still that bowed each rugged ridge and pike
Of Sinai, ere the Voice to Moses came :—
It still was here, the Presence was the same
O'er Heaven's vast walls and rugged fence and dyke
Of the wee World beneath ; and was I then
The only Soul that looked upon His face,
Mid all the spheres but one poor clan of Men,
Mid all those worlds was mine the only Face,
Our Earth the one Oasis in His ken
Where life adored Him, ours the only place ?

III.

'He made the Stars also,' and all the sweep
Of Planets scattered o'er their plain of gold,
Yea, set the Suns aloft to swing of old
In glory on from Deep to vaster Deep ;
He made the myriad things that swim or creep
In tiniest drops on tiniest speck of mould,
Filled all with life, as every leaf unrolled
Shows daily round how Nature yet doth keep
Undreamed reserves of life beyond our thought,
And yet, altho this little Sphere of ours
Is full to overflowing, all who taught
That Planets, Suns, and Stars, and all the Powers
Of vaster Nature, are not made for nought,
Are Dreamers called, and scorn upon them showers.

IV.

God is in all these Worlds, and where e're God
Is, Man ;—I take him in his vaster sense,
Some Creature that has thought and eloquence
To praise his Maker : not that our stone and clod
Builds Sirius' bulk, or that Earth's grassy sod
Clothes bright Capella, but that, wandering hence
If we could pass thro all the vast immense,
No single Star or Sphere would show untrod
By some created thing whose life is praise ;
And, sweeping onwards, countless Sun on Sun
Has each its own Creation, and no rays
Can further pierce than where that law hath run,
For He who sits beyond the flight of days
Allows no waste, sees desert spot in none !

PERMANENT.



‘ANOTHER squatter,’ the old man said,
 ‘Has staked his claim in the field of the Dead,’
 As passing we saw the fresh mould and the mourners
 And the rough posts standing at each of the corners.

‘Accident, I guess, down on the ‘Track,’
 ‘Went to his work and never came back’
 ‘Only his body,—his wife or brother’
 ‘Got that,—but what of himself the other!’

‘I’ve often thought thro the long dark nights’
 ‘After the team had been fixed to rights’
 ‘What would have happened, if, just on the minute,
 ‘There’d slipped from my body the man within it.’

‘It must go somewhere,—of that I’m sure;’
 ‘It must do something, or could’nt endure;’
 ‘We’re busy enough here, and so, for certain,’
 ‘We’ll be busy enough behind the curtain.’

Here he flicked his horses, the reins he raised,
 And I think I’ve his words scarce paraphrased,
 Save one more remark as we onward went, Sir,—
 ‘*That* Settlement there is permanent, Sir!’

OVER SEA.



TO-NIGHT my thoughts fly back across the Sea
 To one sweet spot in England, where the pipe
 Of many a bird fills all the garden wild
 With thanks for tender Spring and glorious Summer,
 Now full of life about the land.—She sits,
 Perchance with some grand soul of other days
 In deep communion, may be in her hand
 The Book wherein are writ the exiled strains
 Of tender, royal James, our Poet-King,
 Who looked once on a garden, as I would,
 And saw his Queen, true Queen of heart and throne.
 Or, may be, thro the realms where Spencer passed
 She passes with him, or beyond this world
 With soul upborne on mighty Milton's wings :
 While I—well, Blocks and Stocks and building terms
 Hold all my time !—yet even in such things
 There's poetry enough, if one but looks
 Below the scaly surface to the heart
 Even of the crocodile monster, Lust o' the world,
 And all the gifts the good world gives to go
 Against the higher gifts of song and soul. * * * *

I hardly heard it ; t'was a Mocassin
The Red Man went by softly : now, crunch, crunch,
Passes a great big English Navvy, pick
On shoulder pannikin in hand, crunch, crunch,
And he goes on :—but there's a poetry
Hangs round his path, great towns and smiling fields
And a good Land where men may multiply.—

There's Poetry about us if we look !—
God's blessing here on every driven spike,
And rail and tie and ounce of iron used,
Cumberland, Moss Bay, or Krupp's Essen steel !—
Each mile of Track means countless happy Homes,
Each mile of Track more food for man to eat,
Each mile of Track means rosy children's cheeks—
Earth has no children like the Little ones
Born in this fierce but kind North Mother-land—
Each mile of Track means cutting from his feet
The Agitator's Platform, and lifts up
Our Politics once again to that clean height
Clear from "Profession" and the evil slime
That gilds some "patriot" fingers, right beyond
The poison-planting selfish Politician,
Preaching sedition with a ready lie,
His one hand on their throats he holds in toil,
The other for his fooled Constituency.—
Such Liars are best answered straight across
Three feet of table with your Derringer—
Each mile of Track means independent men,
It almost makes the brain spin round to think
What the full years will make this great North Land,
No longer lone, but keep so thro the years

Surly for us, that, at her sorest need
Our Mother Country hitherward might point
Space for her overteaming Offspring.—Yea,
True Mother England we have grown from thee,
And we will grow until our greatness grows
Thy pride and glory and thy chiefest Star,
Thy crown of honour thro thy later days !

I love the East : six Millions of her Sons
Speak the same language that I earliest spoke,
I know her, Empress crowned, and marvellous
In wealth and beauty, but for all the gifts
She holdeth in her hand, not there, not there,
Can any Son of England hope a *Home* !—

I know dark Africa, oppressed and rich,
But free to Southward, diamond and gold,
And oil, and spice, and ivory are her gifts,
But what great future hath she to afford
Unto us alien there, or to her own?—

Australia and her little consort Isle,
And those twin Britains in the Southern seas,
Are good Lands all, but distant many a day,
E'en in these days of lightning swift and steam.—

But here we are near England, and some day
May be Earth's central Anglo-saxondom,
For here t'would seem that the Race gravitates,
Like drawing like. Already, at the test
Of numbers only, we o'er match with Folk
All other Continents, and certain this
A few years more will see us far ahead,
Aye, double them tho taken together all.

These are our riches, wood, and corn, and coal,
Oil from the Earth, and every fruit in Spring,
Rich yellow fields of waving wheat, and gold
For those who seek adventure, silver, copper,
Iron, and the chief metals of the earth.
But they are not our boast, our pride is food,
To give to all who ask us of our stores.
Behold the Land is one where one may eat
Of his hands' labour and be satisfied,
None asking part or taking tithe of toil :
All a man's labour here his very own.—
O England, England, send us o'er your sons,
And we will give them food, and they to you,
So ever cry our rich dark loamy fields ! * * *

But time draws on and brings up with it night,
Eve has passed over and the night Hawks flit
From side to side, a Frog croaks and is still,
You hear the silent River, that strange silence
That broods above a sleeping host of men,
So rise and go, lanterned with sudden light,
The broad moon breaking from behind the trees !

BACK HOME.



THE water grows more grey, Man and the Calf
 Are on the left, rock-girthed on every ridge
 There rides a great green saddle, more inland
 Slices of field and slope, and Castle-town,
 If I mistake not—dotted farms, and walls
 Like brown threads line the hills, upon the right
 The lighthouse we are passing, shoals of ships,
 The water growing ever yet more grey.—
 Colliers, and Packets, and great Merchant-Men,
 Tell we are in the Mersey ; now the bouys
 Bob up and stretch away in ordered file,
 And eve comes down ; the engines slow, and we,
 Seeing the lights and lamps of Liverpool,
 Will say goodby to-night on English soil.—

The usual thing—a concertina comes
 Out from its case, and, while the Tender runs
 Up the dark river twinkling to the shore,
 Compels from well worn windpipes “ Auld Lang Syne ! ”
 Why concertinas always wander out
 In times like these is more than I can tell,
 But river tug-boats seem their *habitat*.

There's mud and rain of course to welcome us.—
'Twould not be homelike without mud and rain,—
Drive to the Station, book your Pullman berths,
And, if you've time to do it, wander round ;
So far so good :—we've selfish been, and cared,
Well for our comfort.—* * * That rag-bundle there
Touch it, it moves under the crust of dirt ;—
Sits up, and, look you, 'tis an Englishman !—
Clothes,—Lodging,—not much. And the wolfish eyes
Tell the hard struggle even to get food
Picked greatly from the gutter ; here a girl,—
You've girls yourself, old Fellow, have you not ?—
The Country grows Republican—some day
Their children,—but the subject :—change the text.
Take this wee mite and preach on him.—you there,
Matches ! a dozen applicants at once
To sell you lights, a strange menagerie,
Not wild beasts quite but, may be, better so.

These last twelve lines or more will do for text,
And I must gown myself for Pulpiteer :—
We're a great Nation, fairly prosperous,
Let all that pass—but, as we greater grow,
The greater grows responsibility
And every man has right to ask the State,
I think, for just one chance—what chance have these ?
Some might be helped at once across the sea
Where they could help themselves, or rightly starve :
And others,—Ah, the others !—That's the rub :—
New wine, old bottles—wine and liquor lost !—
It beats me, and it makes one very sad,

For the State will not, could not, if it would !—
Yet there's a level best for all to do :
Each in his place speak just one kindly word,
Each give his penny with the Nation's pound.

We wake in London,—how the night slipped by.—
These English Pullman Cars are something short,
Don't sway so much for all our speed. Turn out ;
Hotel, and bath, and breakfast,—wonder much
If those we saw last night have breakfasted,
Chances against it :—here we're back again,
And dusky day grows darker thro the streets.—
Hours pass, the rain has ceased, the night is fine,
There's as good mud here as in Liverpool :
The Flagstones are strange fields to plough for Bread,
And evil is the seed upon them sown,
And bitter is the harvest reaped therefrom.—
A strong man holding down the weaker : blood
Counts little, and from fifty taken lives,
If fairly taken, hands are easy washed,
At least hereafter, but the mark of *tears*
From one wronged child will leave upon your soul
The smirch not all the Infinites of God
Can wipe away !—O London, were they caught,
A larger than the Thames would flood thy marts
With saltiest brine, and float thy argosies
O'er proud St. Paul's.—

Sometimes I come to think
Half London burnt would save the other half,
And give the Folk who starve to-day, a chance.—

This craze for "*Art*," so called, must often bring
The clenched fist of the real Artizan
In anger on his left hand, open wide
With fierce despair. A hopeless state of things,
When fancy makes gape out the purse but draws
Its strings to strangulation round the throat
When Lazarus crys.—Go furnish forth your rooms—
I do not call against the Palaces,
We need some grandeur in the Commonwealth,—
But on those miles of slate and stucco-front
And money squandered uselessly within—
Our real great Folk are true Liberals—
But that smug Opulence that sucks the State
And, sponge-like, holds in all it takes, almost
Would make me Socialist, with trust some hand
Some day will wring the bloated polype dry.
But hark you, *there are some preach socialism*
To advertise themselves, we take the hint,
If houses ever flame theirs first shall burn—
One hand upon their throats he holds in toil
The other for his fooled constituency—
We know the kind, some call them men of mark—
Mark you, I'd rather be aristocrat
And die Vermin than with Iscariot hang!
And, mark ye too, this last died ages first
And slipped with hisses to the pit!

O Truth,
That sittest hidden save for thy face aflame,
Thou hast a naked sword, and where it falls,
The smitten darkness sheds out light, and all

Back Home.

51

The cause lies bare, where once men saw the lips
And heard the voice that spoke to hide the heart

The World is wiser than its ears would show
'Tis a good Ass, and picking thistles up
Teaches discrimination, wherefore Friends
Just give it time, I've not lost all my hope !

LILITH.



I.

ON all that dream thro quiet hours and spaces
Of silent thought by streams and stiller seas,
And on all workers in the toil and strife
For daily bread, it rises like the breeze,
That Face, that Face that rules our inner life
And comes between us and all other Faces.

II.

It is not that her eyes are lovlier
Than any eyes we look on, or her hair
And brow and breast more beauteous, but her smile
Kills all the beauty out of all things there,
Not that her lips have in them ought of guile
But that she comes and we belong to her.

III.

Time has no laughter in it, and no scorn
Is in the hand that points the past, for Time
Is far too solemn to make mock of us,
But lifts our thoughts up, thro the years to climb,
Till on a sudden we are standing thus
Beside her, who drew life when we were born.

IV.

For we, tho one, are twain, tho some wild fate
Casts each from each upon this world of ours
To grow up singly, fruitless blossoming,
Neath the grim will of those mysterious Powers
That doubtless rule for good, no doubt to bring
At some far day together Mate and Mate.—

V.

Some Monkish Legend write I,—nay, not so :—
I have no patience but for what I see
Enwoven in the mystery of life,
So build no tale of Dark Age devilry,
Of fallen gods, and Adam's fair first wife,
But write of what grows on *us* as we grow.

VI.

Take Boyhood :—Had we care of any girl
Save as some weaker that required our care,
And half despised, because not fit to climb,
And wear the clothes that rough young Urchins wear,
And for her tears for pain at any time,
And gentler thoughts, and hair of longer curl.

VII.

At the word "Love" :—why, I remember well
How furious I would get, and take my gun
And off into the Forest, or the Wild,
To be seen no more home by that day's sun,
Burning with that fierce anger of a child
That thinks the whole world watches on him still.

VIII.

And then beneath some giant of the wood
I would dose off the heated afternoon
Until the evening birds were all in song,
But, sudden I would cease to hear the tune,
For a strange feeling round that made me long
For something then not known or understood.

IX.

And I would think of some one I had seen
That knew me better than I knew myself,
But when or where I knew not, till I thought
This is the memory of some Fay or Elf
That I have read of;—but the next breeze brought
Her back again, half Huntress and half Queen.

X.

And I would almost rise to kiss her,—I
Who feared no tiger like a Woman's kiss,—
And almost hope her breath upon my hair
Who found her presence perfect happiness,
But when I stretched my arms to greet her there
And turned, there was none other standing by.

XI.

And in my dreams she slipped from dream to dream
And filled my thoughts, till other things arose
And drove her from my presence, as I deemed,
With horns and skins and blowpipes, Indian bows,
And huts in woods, and trees that no man dreamed,
And model engines, or some toy of steam.

XII.

Then I awoke and rose, and well content
Passed on my morning path thro many days,
With books and guns, and much with elder Folks,
Loving the old, whose praise indeed was praise,
Yet oft indignant at their careless jokes
At a Boy's loves,—till she returned, who went.

XIII.

It was a lovely evening when I felt
That she was once more with me, and I strove
To see the lovely face of her that was
So close beside, she only whom I could love
Without a thought, and then again the glass
Grew dark, and from my sight did fade and melt.

XIV.

I have loved many a Faery, Mab the fair,
And many an Elf, and many a Mountain Queen,
Vivian in her clear lake and crystal halls,
The wee sweet Empress of the Folk in green,
And Undine in her streams and waterfalls,
But all have died before one Presence there.

XV.

A Boy I write, and hardly yet of Men,
Tho my years make me so, but in my days,
Short tho those days have been and tossed and thrown
O'er many Lands, I know that from her ways
None have escaped, if they will freely own
What rises on them ever and agen.

XVI.

That Face, that Face, between the very Bride
And him that holds her to his heart it slips,
It haunts the marriage pillows, and between
The tenderest Loved and Lover's trembling lips
Exacts its due caress, and, tho unseen
Makes felt that Presence that no heart can hide.

XVII.

For none can wed his Lilith :—round her throat
Is one gold hair, and round about his own
Another gold hair linking hers to his ;—
Albeit her tresses are like network thrown
About him, he feels nothing of what is
Save, when Another charmeth his life's boat

XVIII.

Across the waters for sweet harbouring
To some fair Isle, where he may make his rest,
He sees betwixt him and the faery land
One pale and crowned, a Queen, but unaddressed
Of any Lovers, who doth ever stand
To sour and change the late desired thing.

XIX.

Yet who shall show us Lilith ; in whose eyes
Have all men looked, so pale and pitiful
And yet withal so full of Majesty,
As tho she said, I, that would serve, must rule,
And, as I am, so, Love, thou art to me,
Who art the Adam I have lost, she cries !

XX.

Ah who shall show us Lilith ;—ever more
She rises on Men, but 'tis vain to strive
To view her who so rises oft on us,
For none have seen her on this Earth alive,
And what may be beyond of marvellous
None have returned to tell us from that shore !

THE GIRL I LOVE.



THE girl I love has all her hair
Rolled down her neck in ripples fair,
And hardly faded from her eyes
Are the soft lights of Paradise.

The girl I love is hardly yet
A woman, and the coronet
Of glory from her Father's house
Seems here encircling still her brows.

The girl I love,—few words and fond
But breathing still of more beyond,
Her name which yet I dare not tell
Is sweetness' self made audible.

The girl I love,—more bright the fires
Of Heaven for all that love inspires,
And earth grows changed and not the same
Steeped in the music of her name.

The girl I love,—O seraph sent
To touch my lips with fire, prevent
Them that they sin not on the road
That brings me nearer thee—and God !

A FACE FOUND.

(STRATFORD, ONTARIO.)



THE Face, the one Face of the World, I strove
 To meet in all my wanderings, here I found ;
 A tired wee Child's it was, and all around
 The weary forehead a gold network wove
 The clustered curls, like the first buds that prove
 The young ferns wake from winter and the ground.
 A tired wee Child,—but with such beauty crowned
 A Queen, I knelt in worship not in love :—
 Ah me, a face to make one strive and rise
 To very Heaven, or bend a Saint to sin,
 As fate might rule the possibilities
 That peeped between the lids, half hiding in
 The soundless sapphire depths of human eyes !—
 And, O, the chiselled mouth above the chin !

CONTINUANCE.



LIFE's deeps have deeper depths beyond them all ;—

No sad thought is so sad it does not bring

Some sadder thought to our remembering,

No voice but wakes another at its call :

The ear takes first the roaring of the Fall,

But nearer drawn we hear the water-spring

Murmur below, and the sad waves that fling

Against the rocks the creeping lichens pall.

There is a sea beyond the narrow seas

With shores lying outward from our straitened
shore,

And, thither borne upon the moaning breeze,

Only they learn those lands who heretofore

Had deemed one mystery slew all mysteries,

Nor read the eternal worth of *Evermore*.

On a Picture by my Friend HERBERT SCHMALZ.

BEYOND.

ROYAL ACADEMY, 1883.



BEYOND these Voices and the closing hills
 Before, beyond the moorland, and away
 Beyond the evening, sober, dim, and gray,
 Beyond the faery light that floods and fills
 The Western sunsets full of life, and kills
 Sad thought from off the face of lingering day,
 Beyond, beyond,—and face and eyes betray
 Her thought is far beyond them all, and wills
 Her whole self from the earth!—Ah me, we strive
 Forever up and on with fancy fond
 Until the dream is broken,—we arrive
 Before that river wide whose depths dispond
 Upon the oozy shore, left here alive
 We can but dream that golden, great, “Beyond!”

On a Picture by my Friend HERBERT SCHMALZ.

A QUEEN OF THE MAY.

(PERFECTA, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1883.)



HIS latest born :—sweet, solemn little Maid,
 His latest born :— dew-fresh from faery Land,
 A branch of wild-May careless in her hand,
 A wreath of white-May on her brown hair laid.—
 A pensive little Lady she, and staid,
 And full of strange new thoughts she seems to stand
 Out in the sunlight, waiting for the band
 Of village Revellers, King, and Masquerade.—
 His latest born :—but not on her the years
 Will lay their weary touches and their weight,
 But each hour past, that never more appears,
 Will find her younger, watching at the gate.—
 We come out of our Home with hopes and fears,
 We come out of the Cottage crowned,—and wait !

WORLDWISE.



Then did Worldly Wisdom, rebuking simple Charity, cry aloud upon the young Man, saying, nay not so, she who hath prompted thee is kindly withal but of foolish mind; withhold thine hand; that help thou would'st safely render unto a Brother thou shalt not bestow upon a Sister, for One there is that shooteth sore with many shafts, and, albeit thou hast hardiness to resist their stroke, they will spill the life of her whom thou hast holpen before Men.—THE WORLDIS HISTORIE.

A LOYAL lofty soul : a faery form :
 A high heart battling with a base world round :
 A great sob breaking from the frozen ground
 That leaves chilled thro and seared what it met warm.
 Poor weak strong shelter in the howling storm
 To those left orphaned, and whom snares surround,
 On this base villain path where snares abound,
 And where "trust no one" seems the written norm
 For all wise eyes to read.—Ah bitter this
 To know the little aid one can supply,
 For the foul serpent that will rise and hiss
 Behind your back, yet dare not face your eye,
 And strike *her* to the heart with fang that is
 O'er cruel, because *you* must stand helpless by !

THE DEVIL'S LAKE

(WISCONSIN, APRIL, 1883.)



WE flashed along the edge, and bright lights flung
 Their javelins from the windows of the Cars,
 Mixing their warm tints with the pale cold stars
 On the Lake's bosom ; right above us hung
 Huge tumbled rocks, to which the pine trees clung
 Almost like acrobats : great ruddy Mars
 Rose o'er the rock-peaks opposite, and bars
 Of furnace light out on a sudden swung
 From the swift engine of the Night Express.—
 "God's not de Debbil's !" I turned at the sound—
 The Pullman Black-Cook in his clean white dress—
 And in his words my thought expression found.
 "God's Lake, and not de Debbil's, tho, I guess,
 De Debbil am generally pretty much around !"

AURORA.



CASSIOPEA sheds a falling star
That blazes out past Venus from our gaze,
Beyond the Pleiads, twinkling through the haze
Dim and electric that shrouds all that are :
From the Seven Sisters to the stately Car
A great Belt stretches o'er the heavenly maze
Past Mizar on past Merak, whence the rays
Leap up or sink in dreamless depths afar.
Dark velvet clouds o'er fields electric roll,
Soft here, there black and solid as the night,
Masses of vapour drifting without goal
And passing off into the mystic height,
Where, pale and opalescent, points the Pole —
Shafts ghostly shot and arrowy lanes of light!

DANDELION.



I.

DANDELION, Dandelion,
In your little yellow coat,
You are not a flower to cry on,
You are not a flower to sigh on,
Like the silly,
Sickly Lily—
Merry little shining groat !

II.

I was sped to Minnesota
Ere I got a foreign Blossom,
Saw a Fellow
Pick your yellow
Shining platters
As no matters
And upon the platform toss 'em.—

III.

You looked so forlorn yet happy,
Very sad but so contented,
I the ruthless deed lamented,
From the Cars I jumped to pick you
From the ground, and clean and stick you
Smiling in my coat—but sappy.

IV.

You're a darling little Flower,
 Quite a traveller too in your way,
 Everywhere your master wandered,
 Time, and thought and money squandered,
 You've gone with him, storm and shower
 Manfully facing,
 And so placing
 An example of your power
 Right before him,
 Whispering o'er him,
 Take things bravely, that's the sure way !

V.

But my dear wee man your petals
 Suffer change ; there's no gainsaying
 That their colour is decaying
 From the loveliest of metals,
 Old George-guinea tints, alas Sir,
 I have done my best to save you ;
 Now your time draws near, you know it ;
 Yet you reck not for the pass Sir,
 Only what is given crave you,
 You care not of *wheres* or *whithers*,
 Have no sad thoughts like your Poet,
 Hardly feel a change steal o'er you,
 You are in His hands that knoweth
 And arrangeth all things for you :—
 Glad the Dandelion groweth,
 Glad the Dandelion withers !—

BURR-BUSH.



I.

BETWEEN the Sidewalk and the wall
It grows and spreads its tender leaves,
What right hath it to be at all,
Whence hath it life, and death, and fall,
What time the ice is on the eaves.

II.

The waving fox-tail grasses blow
About it, gay chrysanthemums,
Like golden coins the Faeries strow,
Hang round with buds of sticky flow
That snare the flies with subtle gums.

III.

The smaller weeds around its feet
Look at it lordly overhead,
And, in the evenings long and sweet,
The clouds and flaming sunsets meet
And touch its leaves about with red.

IV.

It hath the dews, it hath the rain
Thro all the kindly seasoned year,
Perchance, you say, it grows in vain,
For neither good of us, nor gain,
Nor bounty meet, nor winter cheer.

V.

The little hedgehogs on its stalks
But wait their hour of hardiness,
When, like that fly that o'er them walks,
They too will start, and nothing balks
Them from their hold upon your dress.

VI.

A perfect pest in Autumn time,
And yet most beautifully designed
To be so from their early prime,
With every guard 'gainst heat and rime
O'er fashioned by a Master-mind.

VII.

The marvel marked on every thorn
Descended from Earth's elder seas
In those grim teeth that tore, and torn
Pained Creatures, ere first Man was born
With all his possibilities.

VIII.

Yet, Burr, you have a good to do,
You cling that you may sow your seed ;—
All is so woven thro and thro
With *Good* and *Evil*, those grim two
Great Facts that we can hardly read.

IX.

You hurt us that you may increase
And spread your kind from year to year,
And Nature would not have you cease,
You work your wrong in perfect peace
For Nature's laws are holy here.

X.

A subtle chain indeed is Life's
And marked on many a link with red,
But God is working in her strifes,
His hand is on the haft, His knife's
Keen edge it is that makes the dead.

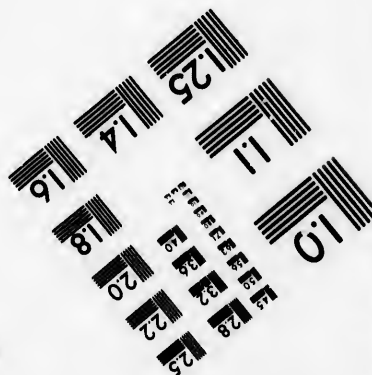
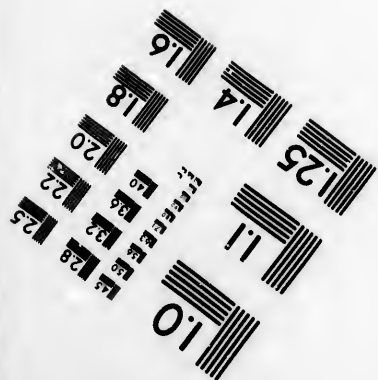
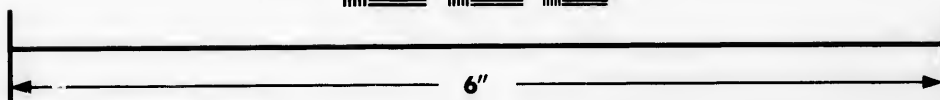
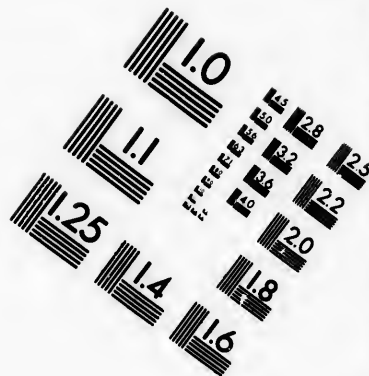
XI.

And faint the type that you express,
Wee Burr-plant, of the thing called *Wrong*.
Perhaps a *Good* in other dress,
Before this World here made digress,
And stumbled, ere the years were long.

XII.

What strange great Penman writes around
On all the thoughts a leaf may hide :—
Yet, little plant upon the ground,
The greatest record ever found
Is only, he has lived and died !





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VICISTI.



The waves go on, the waves go on !

The Prairies here, that round us lie
As silent as the silent sky
And green below as those are blue,
Were once great shallow shifting seas
Between vast mountain terraces
In those old years when Earth was new.

The only breezes now that pass
Are breezes rippling o'er the grass ;
The sea gives place, the green fields smile
Behind the waters mile on mile,
The seas give place, advance, are gone,
The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on,
And leave the land behind them good,
Where, burdened neath the bending corn,
The Prairies laugh for those unborn
With promise here of home and food—
The waves go on, the waves go on !—

The waves go on, the waves go on !
 Some doubtless once withstood the seas,
 Some wiser Slug or Ammonite
 That strove with all its little might
 Against the tide that did not please
 Its little mightship, one that spent
 What power it had of discontent,—
 But still the waters o'er it went.

It did not see the good to come
 From its invaded oozy home,
 Tho water was its element,
 It cried, I hate the waters—well
 It strove its best, there lies the shell.—
 Who reads the parable I write,
 And these few verses penned upon
Our present late-day Trilobite—

The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on !

I do not see that we have need
 To fear for Him who never failed,
 Who made the man, who made, indeed,
 The thought with which he is assailed.—
 The best survive :—a grand, great law
 Which makes Good's victory certain here,
 Where conquest works thro every flaw
 To surer ends, and now more near
 To the great finish nearer drawn
 The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on !
Tho here and there upon the sands
Some sea-weed, shell, or straw, more tall
Than any kith, a moment stands
The tide rolls up, and o'er them all
The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on.—
The Sea is His, He bade it be,
Yea, Christ is in the rising sea !
The Stars of Zoroaster set
Behind the waves, and Mahomet
Is shaken down, who once would round
And barrier in the floods and bound
The great Sea's progress ; what, exempt
Shall Buddha be, upon whose shrine
Is poured no blood or bubbling wine ;
And Brahm, each idol, stick, and stone,
And all the fanes he calls his own
Today, where are they, overthrown !—
But 'tis with pity, not contempt,
The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on !
Those great blind stretches in the dark
For Him, who, hid behind the ark,
Flashed only thro the Cherubs' wings
His glory on created things
Must all give place, for when He came,
Whose face transfigured grew as flame,

The fountains of the mighty Deep
Were broken up—with endless sweep
His waves go on, His waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on !
Where are the glories of the past ?
Were not the Greek gods fair enough ;
Had Beauty not a right to last
And fearless of the buffet rough
Of Time's harsh hand ; was Dian fair ;
Cypris a light a glory there ;
Did not Apollo in his bays
Outshine the sunlight ; Hercules
O'er master Death for many days,
Like Love alone ; did not each breeze
Blow fresh from Boreas ?—ah ! their fruit
Was dust and ashes, and the brute
Of later Greece :—the rites allied
To early cults were purified
By their own force within them, but
The seed was there in germ and shut
To be developed later, when
A softer, subtler race of men
Interpreted to their desires
The earlier truths of force and fires,
And fervent faith of God in things
To fervent faith in self, and lust
To gratify imaginings
That made what it has left them—dust !
The waves go on, the waves go on.—

The waves go on, the waves go on.

Some say I take too low a view :—
I am not here to wrangle Creeds,—
I care not what men say—but do,
My life has mixed too much with deeds.—
Small worth the philosophic talk
Of Athens, and her garden walk,
When I could stroll a few yards down
And in the busy market drown
All talk of rights out, and supply
My vile desires, and choose, and buy,
As common things are bought and sold,
Valuing up each limb and curl,
And depth of breast, and shade of eye,
For some small cursed weight of gold
For slave and sport a captive girl.—
Thank God, thank God the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on—
Two thousand years ago you say
These things took place—Both *yea* and *nay* !—
Put it so.—I will take to-day.
Thank Heaven ! I often lift my hands
In thankfulness that I was born
In the most fair of tropic Lands,
And write no snatches, pilfering torn,
From Guide-Book covers :—for my years
I have roamed widely o'er the Earth,
Wider, perchance, than he who hears
And scorns—well, let him keep his mirth.

Take India ; Buddha did his best
Is now wrapt up and laid to rest :—
Take Burmah ; 'tis a standing joke
What hides beneath the yellow cloak :—
Mahomet yet has several lives
But owes it to his several wives,
And to his reading, deep in part,
Of what composed the human heart :—
Take Brahma, and his thousand lies,
The growth of the dull centuries;
For every temple thro the Land,
Whose thousand granite columns stand
Against the years, I have no name
But haunts and homes of shameless shame.—
What mean I here ?—Well, those at least
Will understand who know the East.—
Confucius, wise enough and good
I grant you, yet but slender stay
For Man to lean on ; and to-day
We call his Land of silk and rice,
And many a strange and quick device,
And People, that when we wore blue
Upon our bodies, used and knew
The compass, printing, porcelain-clay,
Gunpowder, paper, cotton cleaned,
The Land of slaughtered babyhood,
That grand achievement of the Fiend !—
No wonder that the old Faiths cease,
Are drowned away, and laid in peace,
Whose good is broken up and gone
The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on.

What Midget now would rise and take
 Mahomet's Sceptre—let him bring
 A world of men, who call him king,
 And we will stoop to say, Who spake !
 Till then we must decline to see
 His forehead flame with majesty
 E'en of the earth.—A book or two,
 An answer, and a bald *Review*,—
 We have Confucius ! At whose word
 The Faith of Ages shows absurd.—
 Another here ; Agnosticus
 Who knows not *if*, and *that* :—and thus
 Grows modern Bude. In very scorn
 The great god-laughter round is borne,
 Be ye too of the giants ?—Hush !
 No laughter in our ranks, but lay
 Dull ashes on our heads and pray
 For patience, and let pity gush
 Up in our hearts for these to-day
 His modern foemen here, to wit,
 The Bat, the Owl, the Mole, the Tit,
 God help them all before the night,
 For, ever rolling on to Right,
 The waves go on, the waves go on !

The waves go on, the waves go on.

Musing to-day in these new Lands
 Beyond Columbus' furthest seas,
 And thinking how the Centuries

Have kept them safe for the late hands
Of their last Children, we of Time
The latest born and come to prime,
I cannot help but think that we
Have yet some mighty destiny :
For God is more about us here ;
The splendour of the Winter year,
The glories of our Summer brief,
Would seem to build more true belief
And more dependence on His hand
Than is in some less giant Land.

We need the God that Jacob felt
And wrestled with, and strove, and held,
The very Presence that compelled
The man to worship, when he cried
I have seen God and have not died,
And heart, and soul, and body knelt !

The waves go on, the waves go on
It is the fruit that makes the tree ;
He spake who was and yet shall be,
Our visible Eternity,
Who is the Tide of that great Sea
Whose waves go on, whose waves go on !

FINIS.

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IN MEMORIAM.

Oct., 1883.

DONE HIS DUTY—AND MORE.

Detached from the Passenger Express the Engine he was driving and, to save both Train and Passengers, charged and derailed a rapidly approaching Goods' Train that thro some blunder had been switched on to the same Track.— It is almost needless to add that this heroic act of gallantry and instant sacrifice of self to a sense of more than duty was only carried out with the loss of his own life.

PAN out a story—is that the rule,
 Well, I reckon, I'll speak of old John Bull,
 So I'll just chip in till the next goes on.—
 Ohio State, county of Galion,
 There's where he come from : true grit and hard
 Down to the bed-rock, you bet, Pard.
 I guess he didn't go much on fear,
 And was even tough for an Engineer.
 Only last month I shook his hand,
 And he started out for the other Land.—
 'Twas kind'er foolish, but somehow I
 Called after him, Jack, old Boy, good-bye,
 Things didn't seem square, I can't tell why!
 He drove on the Express train that day
 And I watched the Cars for a goodish way,
 Till all was as still as before the rains,
 Or the noonday hush on the Alkali Plains.
 But then the telegraph bell rang out
 And startled me bad as a mule that hitches.—

"Somehow we've got a mistake about,
And the Baggage train has passed our switches
Going the down grade Track full pelt."
And I almost felt like our operatist,
A green-horn yet and a methodist,
Who left his instrument straight, and knelt.—
The grass didn't grow much you'll be bound
As we rushed the station Tender round
And followed them hard along the Line,
On the chance, 'twas little, nothing to nine!—
We followed them fast, and soon we reached
The Cars, and still and safe on the Track,
Lying along like a great log beached
After the tide goes back.
But the engine nowhere, we somehow guessed
How matters had been as still on we went,
But none talked out or in words expressed
The general sentiment.
'Twarn't long after before we were there
For the mass was hot and smoking yet,
With one white steam-jet flung out on the air
And nobody spoke, you bet.
Charged it, that was all, and stopped the train
The Passenger train behind to save,
There were engine and flats piled up on the Plain,
Well—but the deed was brave.—
And there one body, burnt past dressing or salves,
Smashed woodwork and twisted axle bars,
Useless levers and throttle valves
Under a wreckage of Cars.

* * * *

He had ever kept a good look out
But, swinging around a curve,
'Twas enough to shake the strongest nerve
To see what had come about :
 The heavy Goods' Train thundering down the Line.
He had no time to wonder,
But sudden knew that his life was due
The price of some Pointsman's blunder,
And the thought flashed out on him like the sun
Tho only a Man he could give his *one*
 To save the ninety and nine.—

—One jump straight to the couplings, one—
And the thought went thro like a Bowie Knife,
What of my children, what of my wife,
But what of their children, what of their wives,
And what of my life to a hundred lives,—
 And the couplings were undone !

Onward the loosened engine sped,
Like a great black warhorse it dashed ahead.
Jack, with his hand on the valve wide open,
Listening the hoarse harsh rush of the steam
Stood still as the grave, where no word is spoken,
As the engine swayed like a frightened team.—
Yet, may-be, as he stoked the fire-blast higher
He saw his Wife and her new Babe's face in the fire,
And may-be, you know,—— But dash it, Pard,
It cuts a fellow uncommon hard—

There he stood up straight, with his brakes beside,
And a single turn might have put them on,
A single turn and they'd stopped like a stone,
But the engine hurled down the trembling track
Was lost in the vapour and dust flung back,
And only the God that he met alone
Saw how that great heart died !

* * * *

Just one body, burnt past dressing or salves,
Smashed woodwork and twisted axle-bars,
Useless levers and throttle valves
Under a wreckage of Cars.—

IN ITALY.

SAN REMO, CHRISTMAS, 1883.



I.

I sit out in the sun,
In Italy to-day among the vines,
Watching the crisp waves of the central sea
That chase each other to the shore and run,
Wrinkle on wrinkle of good-natured lines,
Round the low rocks and weedless stones that rise
Along the margin in quaint tracery
Of mingled greens and lapislazulies.—

II.

All round the olive trees
Seem full of busy-working woodpeckers,
And tap, tap, tap, sounds out from every bough,
For all the blue-green woods by sure degrees
Are being stripped of their harvest :—if one stirs
From any path they squash the rich ripe fruit,
And, as we climbed the mule-track even now,
The crushed black berries squirted at the boot.

III.

A swelling chrysophras
Breaks, tho 'tis early yet, from every stem
That later on will bear the clustering grapes :—
This terrace here belongs to one that has
Begun to stake his vines, and fashion them
To those espaliers the Italians love
Straight bound and ordered, save when one escapes
And hangs down loaded from the reeds above.

IV.

Against that terrace wall
The cactus with its leaves of malachite,
Unhandled raquets, doses in the sun,
Sulky enough, with thorns for great and small ;
Near him a cousin, grown a giant quite,
With great red fruit stuck quaintly on his arms
That stretch themselves above another one,
The warty-cactus, like a bunch of charms.

V.

The old terreno dyke
With spots and cracks and little crevices
Bakes in the rays, and almost seems to dance
In the kindly glow that quivers o'er it like
A warm aurora :—weeds and mimic trees
Upon the angled top grown bare of lime,
And sparks of quartz from the scalped rockwork
glance
Washed into hollows by the hand of Time.

VI.

And round about the base
A rank of monkish capuchini grows,
Hiding the early struggling violet,
With one dead thistle, and a grassy place
Where the swift hawk-moth oft its shadow throws;
Beyond a cyprus with its seeds, some round
Some split, and o'er the tree like buttons set
That lays its long black shadow on the ground.

VII.

Then bastioned olive bats,
And zigzag terraces that wander up
Past lemon groves, and loaded orange trees,
An Oil Mill with its pile of drying mats
Fresh from the press, and then a great blown cup
The year's first tulip, then an aqueduct
To carry off and wash the olive lees,
Then wild-thyme sweet as ever wild-bee sucked.

VIII.

Next, see, a battered shrine,—
They're getting pretty battered hereabouts,—
With sapphire burrage budding round its foot;
And then a little patch of unstaked vine;
A bank where the first wakened hyacinth pouts,
Cloaked yet and folded, looking crossly at
The great round-tabled bole of olive root
On whose rough knotty knee awhile we sat.

IX.

And higher up the hill

We left the olives ; and the ridge grew bare
With but pistachio shrubs and junipers ;
Blue-berried myrtles ; brooms, where lingered still
A last year's seed-case ; sarsaparilla there,
Thorny, red-fruited ; in tufts between the rocks
Good honest plants of prickly coated furze ;
A bay-tree, and a cousin of our box.

X.

Up higher yet a bit

And then we'll rest :—what strange thoughts fill the
heart
As we mount up, and these grey rocks about
Seem half to kill the landscape out of it
And bring one's own kind back again in part,
They sleep so very peacefully below,
Or at least seem to, and the busy rout
Is stilled into a silent come and go.

XI.

Up : up : the bare ridge crossed,

We pass the frontier fringe of chestnut trees
And we are in among the pines, and sweet
With resinous balms the breeze goes on, till lost
O'er the grey ridge and lower terraces.
And we sit silent here and almost dread
The stillness of the mountains round our feet,
The stillness of the heavens above our head !—

XII.

I think we get near God
Up in the mountains !—Now the sapphire sea
Meets the blue clouds, is lost, and passes out
Of mind with all the towns that lie abroad
And sun them on the slopes. It comes to me,
The thought of Home, and God in all His ways
With us I ponder, all to come about
With our own Peoples in these later days.—

XIII.

Yes, turn to England now,
For Italy fades out, and every Land
Grows nought but that the thought of England makes
Me love the world !—I bend my head and vow
I too will strive with heart and head and hand
Do something for our Folk, all those that come,
Or came from that strong Northern blood that shakes
The grand pulse of our Anglo-saxondom.

XIV.

O keep her great and good !
O Statesmen see your first thought is the State,
For perfect service is unselfishness,
Crush out that lately risen, that hideous brood,
That speak for hire and that professional wait
Upon our latest phase of politics,
Who cut the broidery from the Nation's dress
And cook their caldron messes with her sticks!

XV.

O workers thro the Land,
They steal your penny with the rich man's pound,
For labour lives and thrives on capital ;
And in his grasp, who lifts a robber's hand,
His own babe's strangled gullet will be found
Torn from its throat :—America at least
Has learnt this truth,—speak as you will, we shall,
If deeds grow words, destroy the mad wild beast !

XVI.

For Parties in the State
I care no jot ; on either side, I think,
Go blind men often leading blind men on :
'Tis on the sound sense of our Folk I wait,
And on those seas of, sometimes wasted, ink
That wash all questions, till we come to see
The crossed threads of the fabric lie upon
The naked limbs of stern reality.

XVII.

I hate the law that makes
My father's first his second son's first foe,
And every thought of law that legislates
Twixt Class and Class, and often sadly shakes
Our sense of social justice—let it go
With all such laws ; yet in our Polity
Let worth and wealth and honour have their weights,
You cannot make all one save in degree.

XVIII.

And these great questionings
That tear to-day the Nation must come round
At last to the same point they started from,
Have them thrashed out, and well, for all such things
Burn to grim ends if burning underground :
And let him learn, who robs his neighbour's till,
That Tom the socialist hurts only Tom,
And rights are strong, and strong are Dick and
Will!

XIX.

Reason we need not fear
But some sad day of brute unreasoned deed,
And instincts crushed, and all the beast aroused;
Our constant watch should be upon that year.
And we need guides as well as men to lead,
And stern men like our Fathers, who bid cease
When right required, and were not theory-drowsed,
But fairly balanced kept the State at peace.

XX.

Yet far above us all
One Worker works, and we that work below
See not the pattern ; as the shuttle flies,
We hear the thundrous shafting rise and fall,
We see the years like spinning reels that go,
In endless whirl, uncoiling each its thread.
We see unsearchable infinites,
We see the starry roof spanned out o'er head.

XXI.

We work our little work ;
We turn, we strive, we work against His will :—
Yet how?—Perchance, He wills us so to do,
And wrong, may-be, is but the cloudy murk
Needed to show the light off, needed still
After these thousand ages over-past,
If darkness was not dark could light shoot thro?—
Yet, God, Thy very lights a shadow cast !

XXII.

In infinite degree
Of littleness we work upon this world
Our small plans out, and it its larger plan
Works to the Sun, that spins out perfectly
The vaster scheme of that perfection, pearly
With many a system that aloft was hung
Or ever man's life was, or thought of man,
When to the stars the morning Seraphs sung.

XXIII.

It is unthinkable,
But its vast day has that great Sun of ours
That dwindles so before the infinite,
As yet we are but in its morning.—Well,
The day draws on ; the ages are the hours—
The earth reels blindly after, watched of all
Those unknown Powers beyond our day and night,
To see, if aught Jehovah made, can fall.

XXIV.

To his eternal noon
Our small Sun hasteth, and, as some have said,
Makes for the Pleiads and Alcyone—
None know, save He who made Sun, Earth and Moon,
Save that he hasteth ; but with live and dead,
And good and ill he sweeps upon his way
With many a myriad mate, to where, may-be,
The central Sun Himself is light and day !

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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"To write a sustained poem in Sonnet form, consisting of no less than three hundred and sixty-five stanzas, was rather a bold venture. The Author's earlier work had prepared us for graceful fancy and earnest thought, as well as for correct metrical expression, and there are no signs of deterioration in his present volume. Without professing entire agreement with the views as to the construction of English Sonnets put forward in the preliminary remarks, we may say that Mr. Grant has carried out his convictions in an able manner, and the collection contains some elegant and scholarly lines. In a different style, a weird and ghastly legend, entitled 'The Price of the Bishop' has power to recommend it: and the minor pieces are not without their special merit. Indeed, the Book is much above the average."—*The Graphic*.

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"We noticed with pleasure some time ago a volume of 'Songs from the Sunny South,' by Mr. Grant. The Book now before us contains a more ambitious effort in composition, and it is doubtful if it will find so many appreciative readers. 'A Year of Life' * * * is written in Sonnets; that is to say, each verse is of fourteen lines fashioned after the manner which the Author sets forth as the strictly correct form of Sonnet, being that which was most frequently followed by Milton and Keats. The question of the best form of Sonnet is by many regarded as still an open one, but Mr. Grant has the practice of Wordsworth also in support of the course he has adopted. The flowing plastic Sonnet is made good use of in Mr. Grant's new Poem, and we have no fewer than three hundred and sixty-five examples of it. * * * In all parts of the Poem there is much good writing, many striking thoughts well expressed. * * * The minor Poems in the Book are short and musical. Mr. Grant has a faculty for vivid description, and his gift of imagination is also considerable."—*The Banffshire Journal*.

"This is a daring undertaking,—Spenser tried to write a short poem or two in Sonnets, but, though he has preserved them, he did not reckon himself successful in these attempts, as after his powers had reached their fulness he never repeated the mode of writing he used in the 'Rimes of Rome.' Where Spenser has failed, Mr. Grant need not hope to be completely successful, the more so as he has bound himself by the fetters of what is called the legitimate Sonnet. If there is a daring exhibited in the form adopted, there

is also daring in the plan—which is an almanac of Sonnets, and, at the same time, the discussion of questions as old as thoughts which occupy alike ‘Ecclesiastes’ and ‘In Memoriam.’ Yet we must say that he is much more successful than we could have deemed it possible; many parts of the Poem are very fine. * * * We shall give a specimen or two. * * * There are many stanzas equally beautiful which would deserve to be quoted. * * * In the Minor Poems included in the volume the Author has exhibited his old liking for the French ‘Balade’ and his mastery of its intricate measure. As a specimen we would direct the reader’s attention to ‘Lilith,’ the first of the ‘Ballades.’ ‘Undine’ is also a fine Poem on a theme suggested by the well known romance of similar name.”—*The Stirling Journal*.

“There comes to us with the fair name of the writer of ‘Songs from the Sunny South’ a curiosity in literature. But it is not a curiosity that is to be passed lightly by. * * * Such a Poem may indeed claim for itself the merit of novelty; for it is, we believe, as Mr. Grant considers it, ‘the first and only one of any length in the English tongue written throughout in true Sonnets.’ * * * ‘A Year of Life’ lands us, at the outset, in a world of Fate, where ‘we are torn and tossed about of various beliefs and misbeliefs, till in the Eternal nature of things we begin to see hope.’ And there in that world of Fate, governed by Laws incomprehensible, we proceed slowly from Infancy to Boyhood, Manhood, and the Winter of Old Age—beautifully pictured as a Bride waiting and watching ‘through the starlit night for her strong groom the Summer,’ till—* * * Mr. Grant has indeed set to himself a lofty theme; but even if he shoot ‘at the mid-day sonne, though he be sure he shall never hit the marke, yet as sure he is, he shall shoote higher than [him] who aymes but at a bush.’ There is vigour in his verse, and beauty, and at times there is a commendable simplicity. There is much touching earnestness in such a Sonnet as this:—* * * Such thoughts so put cannot fail in their moral effect; and there is throughout the Poem an evident purity of purpose that sends home with double force its thrilling verse. Now and again it would seem that there is too much doubt and reasoning, too much unrest—a sentiment too strangely placed that Man is made, and does not make himself;

that man is what he *must* not what he *would* be. Fate, an indefinable Intention, plays at times so great a part that there is but little room for the opportunity which is said to come once in his life to every man. Something of this may be seen in the first of the other stanzas we purpose to quote—stanzas which treat very naturally, very artistically, of the Poet's first god, Love. * * * Mr. Grant has wound up with the 'Year of Life, a few other Poems—all of them short, and most of them of merit. * * * The volume is strikingly bound and well got up, is deserving of study, and will, we confidently expect, meet with acknowledged favour.'—*The Oracle*.

"We scarcely think that the present volume of Poems will obtain for the Author so large a circle of readers as his other work, which, whatever its defects, proved the possession of rare qualities of thought and expression, affording unimpeachable grounds for congratulation. Still in the present volume Mr. Grant gives ample evidence of very considerable poetic gifts. His verse is charged with eloquent feeling, and the Author's ideal is a lofty one—full of hope and the ardent aspirations of youth, and a love and trust in all pure things. But excellent as is much of the work in this last volume, we feel convinced that Mr. Grant will, if his health permits, rise to even a higher level. * * * The writer tries to shadow forth a Creation, a Rising, an Origin, call it what we will, 'under the cold, strong-blue eyes of the past Saurians, and vast creatures of the early swarming seas, keeping, too, before me "The still-eyed faces of our silent Dead." '— * * * The Author is certainly seen to advantage in 'The Price of the Bishop,' which has a distinct interest of its own, and is, indeed, a poem-drama of unusual merit. The heroine is charmingly and gracefully sketched : — * * * There is real poetry in these last lines, as, indeed, there is in many others in this poem. The 'Ballades' and miscellaneous pieces should not be overlooked."—*Nottingham Daily Guardian*.

* * "He has admirable mastery of the form of verse he employs. Some few eccentricities of spelling and punctuation might be pointed out, and alliteration is too freely indulged in ; but, these apart, Mr. Grant writes, as a rule, with fine facility and melody, and yet with vigour. We observe that he is the author of some

previously published poems which have met with approval, but, not being familiar with the former volume, we cannot institute comparisons; yet from that which is now before us we are satisfied that Mr. Grant has a good deal of the poetic quality in his nature, and a large measure of poetic grace in thought and expression. We open the Book at random to select a specimen of his powers, and we take the following bright descriptive passage. * * * But Mr. Grant does not content himself with the beauties of Nature in his 'Year of Life.' He touches Politics, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Science, Religion, and it is hard to say what not, including a series of stanzas to the 'Great Sons of Song.' In fact the aim of the Poem is so gigantic that the performance is dwarfed, and its real merits are apt to be overlooked."—*The Glasgow Herald*.

"The ordinary reader is apt to fancy that the Poet luxuriates in his work—that he becomes elevated, as it were, into a state of semi-consciousness, and that his thoughts, as well as his lines, arrange themselves in marching order he scarce knows how. * * * But in the case of a sustained effort, where time enters as an element, and the ordinary changes of life interfere, it is evident that there must be a plan, and that plan carried out. Whether his readers sympathise with him or not, the Author is certain to get the benefit of the mental discipline he has voluntarily undergone. And the higher and more sustained the effort, the greater the advantage. * * * We have simply thought and read as most men, and to that extent are able to appreciate the service our Author has rendered to thoughtful and earnest people. This is not Mr. Grant's first attempt. We have pleasant recollections of his 'Songs from the Sunny South,' and with regard to his present Volume, whether his readers will derive the same advantage in reading it which the author had in composing it, is more than we would venture to affirm, for the language is often rather intricate. But making allowance for that, there remains more than enough richly to reward the reader—only premising that he has something of the poetic instinct; other readers may be warned off. To give an idea of the labour involved in the production of the volume before us, the principal Poem 'A Year of Life' contains a Sonnet for every day in the year. Now, the Sonnet, as we find from the Book and from

a reference to Milton's Sonnets, which our author takes as his pattern, contains fourteen lines, and the following lines rhyme:—First, fourth, fifth, and eighth; second, third, sixth, and seventh; ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth; and the tenth, twelfth, and fourteenth. To write so as to stand criticism under these conditions is enough to make the boldest shrink. * * * In the treatment of his subject the Author displays that remarkable familiarity with Nature, along with a reverent spirit, which were so apparent in his former volume. * * * The volume is beautifully got up, and does great credit to printer and publisher."—*The Elgin Courier*.

"The Sonnets, written after an approved model, are not only readable, but enjoyable, the ideas as well as the diction being refined and poetic. In 'The Price of the Bishop' there is considerable dramatic power, and some of the fugitive pieces, notably 'Under-tones,' contain the very essence of genuine poetry."—*Liverpool Daily Courier*.

"Mr. Grant exhibited considerable promise in his former volume, 'Songs from the Sunny South,' and he now challenges criticism with a more ambitious effort. * * * There are many individual Sonnets which have real poetic value, namely those that aim at expressing simple feeling. For instance * * * is very beautiful. Here there is something of true passion, and the higher knowledge of love. There is also sweet pathetic beauty in * * * and much sweet hopefulness in those Sonnets treating of childhood and boyhood. * * * 'The Price of the Bishop' is a grim story, powerfully conceived, and told with picturesqueness, pointing to the moral duty of rising against tyranny and wrong. * * * Perhaps the best poems in the volume are those descriptive of natural scenes, such as 'Away West,' in which Mr. Grant shows much sympathy with the various aspects of nature; and the 'Mystery of Margaret,' a sombre ballad, in which the natural and the supernatural are blended in an artistic manner, reminding us of the late Dante Gabriel Rossetti. * * * Altogether we prefer Mr. Grant's lyrical work, * * * where his expression is freer and therefore truer. * * * There is much crudeness in Mr. Grant's verse, but there is also much that is graceful, and much that is happily expressed, while earnest and lofty intention pervades the whole of his work."—*Sunday Times*.

"Every now and then we come across a Sonnet which gives indications of genuine power. * * * The descriptive faculty which characterises these lines shows itself both in other Sonnets and in the miscellaneous poems which the volume includes. * * The following Sonnet is a perfect picture of a fishing-village. * * It seems to us that Mr. Grant has not sufficiently cultivated that poetic faculty which he undoubtedly possesses."—*The Pictorial World*.

"Written throughout on the strictest Miltonic model."—*Cambridge Express*.

"About a year ago we had the pleasure of noticing in these columns a volume of promising verse, published by Mr. Cameron Grant under the title of 'Songs from the Sunny South,' and now we have to welcome the appearance of a second collection of Poems by the same Author, the most important feature of which is a series of three hundred and sixty-five Sonnets, forming what is termed 'A Year of Life.' This Poem is somewhat unique, as it gives in a connected form an outline of a semi-mystical system of Philosophy, which is enlivened by occasional denunciations of the materialistic teachings of several prominent scientists. Mr. Grant has studied closely the course of cosmological speculation, and can follow with secure step the successive changes the Earth has undergone before it became a fit habitation for man. As specimen of Mr. Grant's success in stating abstruse thought in Sonnet form we are tempted to quote the following * * * In a powerful Sonnet, Mr. Grant, thus speaks, in graceful language, of the action of the divine life on man :— * * * The other pieces are of a miscellaneous character, but most of them are marked by high poetic merit. There are several 'Ballades' showing his command of this style of versification, and a weird piece entitled the 'Mystery of Margaret.' The Volume closes with a Melodious Sonnet on the late Gustave Doré. Despite Mr. Grant's mysticism, all lovers of genuine poetry will recognize in him a true Singer who is yet destined to produce works surpassing his previous efforts, alike in maturity of thought and perfection of versification."—*The Edinburgh Courant*.

"Mr. Grant, whose former volume of poems showed decided metrical faculty and poetic fancy, here presents us with a more ambitious piece of work. His 'Year of Life' consists of a series of

three hundred and sixty-five Sonnets—one for each day in the year—in which the changing moods and thoughts are reflected. * * * The work is too systematic to be equal in quality all through; some of the Sonnets are good, some are middling; a few are poor. * * * But hardly aught else could be expected of a great Poet, and we accord Mr. Grant high praise when we say that about one fourth are musical and sufficing. A very beautiful Sonnet is * * * and another almost as fine is * * * 'The Price of the Bishop' has power and some fine lines, and a few of the shorter pieces at the close we have read with enjoyment, notably 'Shortly Before' and 'The Vale Between'."—*Nonconformist*.

"Mr. J. C. Grant has in a former volume, 'Songs from the Sunny South,' achieved what competent judges have regarded as a high success. We do not know the volume, but can readily believe that it is a good work, for Mr. Grant has the accomplishment of Verse in no mean degree, and his genius is eminently suited to the lyrical method. In the volume before us those passages are the best in which he describes nature at first hand, or gives vent to passionate and, on the whole, chivalrous feeling. * * * Mr. Grant has great facility in writing the Sonnet * * * we desire to give full credit to those generous sympathies which are so clearly shown in his 'Year of Life,' and in the notes upon current events which are given in the appendix to that poem. 'The Price of the Bishop' is a powerful poem, and gives evidence not only of high poetic feeling, but of great facility in the art of producing picturesque and effective verse."—*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*.

"Mr. Grant's leading poem in this volume is a kind of *tour de force*. He has written a poem meant to mirror the typical experiences of man at a certain stage of life in Sonnets, which number three hundred and sixty-five; that is, the mood or thought or passion of each day of a year is professedly transcribed. To do such a thing with complete success, we need not say, would demand a genius of rare plasticity and self-restraint. Mr. Grant has studied the Sonnet and understands it; he is, moreover, ready, facile and fluent. * * * Of the other poems, we like best 'Shortly Before' and 'From the Shore.' Mr. Grant has lyrical power and wide range of expression. As in his former volume we have here some

specimens of 'Ballades' which show dexterity and are not without grace and daintiness."—*British Quarterly Review*.

"We would not undertake to say why, but of all the varieties of metrical composition among men the Sonnet is the most generally tantalising to readers. Every bard and bardling, as a matter of course, takes to the writing of Sonnets, with the general result of burying their talent in fourteen lines of vague and dimly intelligible verbosity. If they considered for a moment how few in the whole range of English literature had been successful in this department,—that the notables might be numbered on one's finger ends—they might pause before entering on ground where the chances are so dead against success. But, as said Lord Beaconsfield 'it is the unexpected that always happens'; and certainly in the volume now before us we have found an instance of the truth of that saying. We generally expect a book of Sonnets to be merely a book of—words; the unexpected has turned up, however, and we have here a volume of Sonnets and sense. Mr. Grant has before this made good his claim to poetic honours, and certainly the volume he has now given us shows the sweep and scope of his genius to be equal to all that was anticipated of him from his earlier work. * * * When we say that the principal piece is composed of three hundred and sixty-five Sonnets, our readers will readily understand that it is a work of no every day occurrence. Of the design the Author says * * * The reader's enjoyment, however, will be pretty much outside of this altogether. Many of the Sonnets are pieces of such exquisite workmanship, so heavy laden with the fruits of a rich and fertile fancy, that they not only 'stand well enough on their own bottoms,' but can derive little or no advantage from being considered as parts of such an involved design. In fact such methods of typifying types, of subtle indirectness of allusion, do not conduce to the clear, intelligible utterance so essential in one who would deliver a message to men. It is indeed the Will-o'-the-wisp which leads into the bogs and fogs in which the ordinary sonneteer so hopelessly flounders. The grouping of them into 'beginnings,' &c., according to the general drift of their subject matter, would be a handy classification, but no more. In a great number of the early stanzas the poetical treatment is far more satisfactory than the

philosophy inculcated, beautiful as many of its positions are. * * * Among the many beautiful Sonnets which begin the book we note XX and XXI, the former expressing in very felicitous terms 'the eternal set of the tide of things for better,' the latter, the great influence which momentarily small events may exercise in determining the character of a life. Some of the best of them take up aspects of what used to be called 'the argument from design,' treating it in that rich variety and with that abundant play of feeling which are only found in connection with the poetical temperament. Although we would never advise our readers to go to their poetry for their philosophy, nor to their philosophy for their poetry, they will find somewhat of both finely expressed in the following : * * * Space will not permit us to do more than indicate briefly the other matters treated in his subsequent course. Many choice things will be found in connection with the subjects Boyhood, Manhood, a few reflections from the Boston Light in pretty original settings on marriage; and then we land among the 'Sons of Song,' where will be found Sonnets on Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth. Our readers may wish to see the one on Burns. Here it is — * * * The Author afterwards passes on to subjects of personal liberty and national freedom, touching in his progress on recent incidents of political importance in Russia, America, Ireland, &c., devoting well on to his last hundred stanzas to the approach and accomplishment of age in nature and in man. The other Poems in the volume show considerable mastery over various forms of versification. Their subjects are treated somewhat mystically, which will please many, but as bits of literature few of them show the same vigour of thought and expression that many of the Sonnets do. Taken altogether, we have not met for a long time with a volume of poetry written with so much heart-warmth, and in a style so effective in phrase and figure. It is a work of more than passing interest, and as such, we commend it to all lovers of genuine poetry." — *Aberdeen Daily Free Press*.

